

What About Golf Course Maintenance During War-Time?

By JOHN MONTEITH, Jr.

Wise management and knowing where to curtail are **MUSTS**, if permanent damage to golf courses is to be avoided.

THERE are any number of predictions as to what effect the present emergency will have on golf and golf course maintenance. Regardless of these differences of opinion it is generally conceded that whatever they may be, the effects will be quite different from those of World War I.

The curtailment of metal has already been felt by the manufacturers of golf course maintenance equipment. The recent ruling on rubber directly affects the game itself as well as the equipment used in the maintenance of the courses. Those charged with the management of courses must therefore consider immediately a change in maintenance methods to keep the course in as good condition as practicable this year. The possibility of its being a long term problem must also be considered so that the course may be brought back to its usual standard at the end of this emergency as rapidly and economically as possible.

Pseudo-Experts Are In Abundance

Whenever curtailments are suggested there are always plenty of individuals who are qualified experts at simply crossing off figures on budgets. It doesn't require any exercise of intelligence or judgment to slash budgets for golf courses or anything else. It will, however, require considerable intelligence and judgment to adjust many golf club budgets in the present emergency if these courses are to be kept in a condition that will justify reclaiming them at the end of the emergency. Therefore, Public Enemy Number One of any golf course is the individual whose principal aim is to slash budgets under the panicky impression that golf is through. The curtailments in turf maintenance during the depression clearly demonstrated that only wise management prevented permanent damage being done to golf courses.

If the membership feels that the club is worth saving efforts should be directed toward making any necessary reductions in expenses with a view to cutting where the permanent damage from neglect will be least. Thoughtless cutting of expenses may quickly bring about unwarranted neglect which may make members soon give up the game. Such resignations will necessitate further cuts which in time will bring about additional resignations. It will now be more apparent than in the past that dues from dubs are as useful as dues from the low handicap players, so it is to be hoped that this situation will serve at least to give the high handicap player some share of consideration on golf courses.

Expenses for equipment will automatically be reduced since it will be hard to purchase. It is, therefore, important to consider methods for conserving to the utmost all equipment on hand. Mowers should be kept properly sharpened, at the best adjustment, for careless adjustment can greatly shorten the life of high speed mowing equipment.

Labor Costs Cut Most

The chief curtailments must obviously be in labor. In many sections this would be necessary regardless of budgets, for the simple reason that adequate labor will not be available. Intelligent supervision will be more needed than ever if this limited labor is to be used to best advantage. In addition to high class supervision there will be a need for hearty cooperation from club officials and members in adjusting themselves to lower standards of maintenance. There will be plenty of conflicting opinions as to what are essential. Other things equal, the course that will remain in play the greatest number of years will be the one where the opinions of those who know something about course maintenance have pri-

orities over the opinions of those who are primarily interested in their personal preferences or prejudices on the course.

One of the first suggestions commonly made for curtailment of maintenance costs on a golf course is "just let the rough go." Unfortunately, like many of the suggestions that are forthcoming these days, this simple plan is not as workable as the sponsors picture it. On a few courses it will work but on most courses the rough is too dense to be neglected for long.

Heavy, neglected rough may soon represent a greater cost to members in the form of lost golf balls than is saved through reduced mowing. When that stage is reached members will play their golf on other courses. Less frequent mowing no doubt will reduce costs but judgment must be used or the purpose will be defeated.

If heavy grass is permitted to stand until the members will tolerate it no longer there will be so much hay left that the loss of balls will be as great as before the mowing. Then there will be an added cost of raking and removing this hay, for players will naturally be more critical than usual this year of conditions that greatly increase the number of lost balls. Curtailments in the rough can best be made by neglecting areas that cannot be handled by power equipment. Such neglect may be a blessing in disguise in calling attention to the number and extent of these areas which are relics of the "horse and buggy" era of golf courses.

Mow Fairways Less Frequently

In order to conserve the equipment and to save labor it will be necessary to mow fairways less frequently. In order to avoid the risk of serious damage to turf by "scalping" which is more apt to be apparent when turf is mowed less frequently, it is well to raise the mowers to cut higher. The best height to cut will vary with the different types of grass. This may raise objections from some of the more critical players, but the decision should be made in favor of the long-time effect on the course.

A feature of many golf courses that should receive immediate attention of club officials in the light of present conditions is the large water hazard from which balls cannot be readily retrieved. In many instances a new tee at one side of or across the water will make it possible to by-pass the water hazard and thereby

greatly extend the play with present supplies of balls. A local rule permitting players to drop a ball on the other side of the water hazard will serve the purpose in many instances. Some of the sticklers for length, etc., will of course object to such changes. However, the length of time the majority of members can continue to play should now have preference over matters of length of the course in terms of yards.

Many golfers who, in normal times, do not object to the loss of balls in a water hazard will make a big fuss about green-keeping methods if they lose a ball in long grass near the edge of the water. Therefore, by-passing of these water hazards in many cases will account for a sizeable saving in hand labor for maintaining banks around these hazards.

What Price Sand?

As was pointed out in *GOLFDOM* last year, averages from 20 well-kept courses showed that labor used for raking sand traps cost about as much as that for mowing both fairways and tees. On many courses more money is spent for raking sand than for mowing putting greens.

Many of us have repeatedly urged the abolishment of surplus sand traps or conversion into grassy hollows. The clubs that have heeded this advice can now profit by these changes. The large supply of traps that remain will usually have to go without regular raking on most golf courses. Where large quantities of sand are repeatedly washed out of traps onto fairways or elsewhere it would be well to remove it rather than to be constantly putting it back into the trap.

The idea that is frequently presented of "just throwing in a little clover or some other seed" to solve the sand trap problem is another sign of panic rather than sense. Unless traps can be changed so that power mowers may be used in them there is no point to seeding them. It is better to completely neglect them as sand rather than to neglect them as dense mats of undesirable vegetation that will merely add to the lost ball nuisance.

The cost of watering can be greatly reduced on many courses to the distinct benefit of the turf. However any statement that watering should be cut to a certain fraction of past applications is certain to be misleading. There are courses with full watering facilities that have not been greatly abused. There the



1942 class of the Massachusetts State College winter school for greenkeepers is shown in the above photo. (Five greensmen who attended the regular class sessions were not present when the photographer 'said his piece'.) Prof. Lawrence S. Dickinson, director in charge of the winter school, is shown top right in photo.

Graduating exercises for the 1942 school will be held as part of the opening program of the annual MSC Golf Course Maintenance Conference, Friday, March 13. Roland H. Verbeck, director of short courses at MSC, will present the certificates, and Carlton E. Treat, supt., Montclair (N. J.) GC, will give the charge to the graduates. The conference will continue through Sunday, March 15, concluding with the annual Experts on Trial program with the "Chief Justice" and the "eight old men". The following organizations are actively interested in this sixteenth annual conference: Greenkeepers Club of New England, GSA, PGA, N. J. GSA, Conn. Assn. of Golf Cse. Supts., R. I. Greenkeepers Assn.; Northeastern N. Y. Greenkeepers Assn., and Philadelphia GSA.

costs cannot be drastically reduced without loss of turf.

At the other extreme are the courses where water has been applied in great excess for several years. In these cases the vegetation has largely changed and the turf is now chiefly composed of such plants that require ample supplies of water. On these courses any drastic cut in watering costs will result in loss of large areas of turf.

On the courses where an intermediate policy of watering has been carried out it will be possible to make definite reductions in watering costs with only temporary damage to the turf.

The control of diseases on turf is complicated not only by reduced funds but by the threatened curtailment of mercury. Since the mercury fungicides have been standard treatments for turf diseases for several years the limitations in the use of this metal will soon have a definite effect on putting green maintenance. The clubs that have supplies of these fungicides in stock will be wise to ration them carefully so that maximum protection may be obtained from them. Other fungicides have promise of replacing the mercury compounds but their values have not yet been determined fully. Beware of the quack remedies that are sure to appear.

A decided reduction in the amount of water used on the putting green will reduce the severity of brown-patch and make present stock of fungicides last longer. Some careful pruning of trees to open up better air circulation across greens will also help cut down the damage from brown-patch. Supply of inorganic fertilizers may be restricted by demand for war

materials, but there are no present signs of shortage of organic fertilizers such as cotton seed meal, soy bean meal, castor pumice and activated sludge.

Metropolitan GA Calls Off Tournaments Lasting Over Day

METROPOLITAN Golf Association, at a recent organization meeting of the Executive Committee, decided to drop for the duration, tournaments which would require more than one day to complete. Chiefly affected by this decision are the amateur championship, the amateur-professional championship, which last year supplanted the open championship of the MGA, the junior championship, and the public links championship.

In lieu of events which would require more than one day to complete the MGA plans to conduct a series of one-day tournaments. Included among these will be an amateur-pro tourney, details of which will be determined later.

The Metropolitan association plans to cooperate with the USGA in the conduct of the sectional qualifying round for the "Hale America" tournament. The committee also decided to hold six one-day tournaments.

Before reaching a final decision on Red Cross events, the committee decided to get in touch with the four sectional associations to determine the most effective methods of conducting these events, always, of course, with the view of raising the most money for the Red Cross. All amateur prizes will be United States Defense Savings Bonds and Stamps.