

TOUGH YEAR

Shows Pro Problems Mounting

By WILLIE OGG

★THE 1944 SEASON will go on the records as one of the toughest golf pros have ever had to weather. Scarcity of merchandise plus decline in number of lessons given, made serious inroads on pros' income, and danger signals are flying all over the land. Many pros augmented their income by taking jobs in war plants but there were also many who were unable to do this because of the extra jobs piled onto the pro either through lack of labor or insufficient club revenues.

Clubs as a general rule did not raise their dues to offset the decline in dollar values with the result that they were unable to compete for labor. This factor, combined with the classification of golf course labor as non-essential, created conditions which re-acted unfavorably on those left to carry on the work.

We hear of many clubs where the members pitched in to help the pros and greenkeepers to carry on but the general rule has been the opposite. Too often do we hear bellyaching because pre-war conditions have had to be sacrificed. An atmosphere of repugnance has thus been generated among those who are trying so hard to keep things going until the war is over.

There are a few spots where pros got by this season, but these are few and far between and the question arises as to what to do about it. It is obvious that we cannot hope for pre-war conditions and it is also obvious that the pro shops must remain open until the big scrap is over.

I would suggest that the manufacturers co-operate by giving the pros all the merchandise possible and the creation of new lines to build up the gross volume with the salesmen helping out with suggestions on selling, display and the amount of stock to keep on hand.

The PGA through its Educational committee must go into the various sections for enlightening pros as to the latest merchandising methods. The PGA Manufacturers committee needs to keep in constant touch with the manufacturers and iron out the kinks that arise from time to time. The pros themselves must, to keep an accurate record of each club members' purchases so that they will have the data necessary to present to club officials for the grand awakening to come.

Even before the war the majority of pros were hanging on the financial ropes. The reasons for this are varied and many. However, investigation will show that the per member purchases in the pro shops were away too low to permit of profitable operation.

The average club member believes sincerely that every pro shop is a bonanza and that whatever is bought there is nearly always at a premium. We know that the reverse is true but who is to spread the gospel? I believe that it calls for a joint effort of all concerned to get the truth before the powers that be and that an investigation be made and data prepared of all the pro shops, not only of the gross volume but also the per capita purchases.

It must be made possible for high grade men to stay in the profession. Unless a clear picture is presented to club officials of the true state of affairs I am afraid we will continue to work under the old set-up and that we will see a gradual shift of our best men into other lines.

Indications are that the high wage level will continue in the postwar period and this will call for a general revision upwards of operational costs and club dues. It is surprising how little has been done to meet the new conditions that will surely arise.

V Mail from New Guinea

It has been a long time since I have had any golf news, but I certainly hope that all of you have had a very successful season despite war conditions. As for myself, I am still in New Guinea which to me is the hell hole of creation. Dutch money is used here, but it might as well be coconuts for there's nothing you can buy. These jungles are really rugged and there are plenty of Japs in this neck of the woods, and at times some excitement. I have spent some time lately on the front lines and there are none of the comforts of a country club to be found in the fox holes. It has been a long while since I have had my hands on a golf club, and I am just aching to trade this rifle off for one.

(Signed) Bill Loeffler

Bill is a nephew of Emil Loeffler, Green's Supt., Oakmont C.C., Pittsburgh. Last report on John, Bill's brother, told of him laying out a course in Africa for American troops.