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Discount Houses Threaten Existence of Pro Shops

By MAX McMURRY

Pro. Alameda (Calif.) Municipal Golf Course

One of the serious problems of the professionals in our Bay area also is damaging almost every other medium size or small retailer in the territory. It is the "discount-house" type of store operation that reputedly sells merchandise at a smaller margin above cost than is required by other retailers for taxes alone.

At such establishments, one even can buy an automobile, finance it at 3 per cent and get gasoline at a discount.

To be eligible for such discounts one is supposed to be a civil service employee or member of some union, although these requirements are merely nominal.

It is readily realized that this sort of retailing is driving some retailers out of business. The so-called "fair trade" laws doesn't offer fair treatment to the genuinely fair-trading retailer.

"Discount" dealers can get merchandise from almost any manufacturer and often at a preferential price plus a phony "advertising allowance."

There is widespread resentment of this competition. Retailers whose taxes pay the salaries of civil service employees and who buy and sell the products made by union members who patronize "discount" stores, are becoming very active, adroit and effective in self-defense. They are growing to be a power far more valuable in the public relations needed by civil service employees and union employees than "discount" store arrangements.

Encouragement given the "discount" stores is one of the most dangerous threats to small business.

This move already has cost professionals a large sum. It is endangering pro credit and eventually may put manufacturers at the mercy of a comparatively few big buyers.

The pro has to handle this danger wisely and discreetly, stressing the factor of individual and continuing and convenient service.

There is a possibility of thoughtful and mutually profitable co-operation between professionals and leading makers of golf goods to prevent the "discount house" wrecking of a rational retailing profit. If that co-operation is achieved it may produce results that could be the salvation of moderate-sized and small business.