

# Labor Problems Aren't A Golf Monopoly

By **DINO POLITZ**

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**I** have yet to attend a meeting of supts. — national, regional or local — where sooner or later the problem of employment hasn't been brought up. Getting and keeping competent men apparently is the most perplexing thing we have to contend with. Many of us have built up a real complex about the labor situation. We have gotten the feeling that ours is the only industry in which employment problems exist.

If it is any consolation to you, that is far from the truth. I once worked for one of the major automobile manufacturers. One of the first things that was impressed on me was the problem this company had in employing reliable personnel. Mondays and Friday were particularly difficult. A lot of people simply didn't show up the first day of the week, and on Friday, many of them took off to get an early start on the weekend. Getting a quorum to assemble cars was an accomplishment.

By comparison, we don't have it so bad. We can have it even better if we are careful in picking our employees.

## Closely Observe Applicant

Like many supts., I have been able to keep a full working force through recommendations made by my employees and through men coming to the club seeking employment. By closely observing the applicant during the employment interview, and by taking the time to check his work record, I have been able to get a fairly reliable line on the prospect's disposition, ability, stability and willingness to work.

After hiring a man, I make sure that he is properly trained, either by our experienced employees, my assistant or myself. His training goes on for some time as he advances from handling jobs requiring medium skills to ones such as spraying and fertilizing. I attempt to train all men under me in all phases of our work

so that there is sufficient help available when emergencies occur. As I see it, there is no justification for tying up a maintenance crew because a supposedly key man is absent. Eventually, every employee should have another employee who is capable of stepping in and backing him up.

## Like Scenery Change

What is more, I have found that most men like to be able to handle more than just one job. They take pride in being versatile. An occasional change of scenery causes them to take more interest in their work. A fellow who is content to look at the back end of a greenmower all day, or remain perched on a tractor week after week, is going to become bored. It's hardly necessary to mention the trouble a bored worker can cause.

Your labor situation, good or bad, is a reflection of what kind of a supt. you are. The analysis of the entire picture should start with an analysis of the supt. himself. How does he fare when these questions are asked?

Does he know what should be done and is he capable of training others to do it?

Is he genuinely interested in having the best course?

Is he respected by fellow workers, employees under him, and the people for whom he works?

Does he accomplish what he sets out to do, or does he have a reasonable explanation for not getting certain things done?

Is he completely honest about keeping the pro, club manager, etc. informed of what goes on — or is he secretive about such things?

Does he plan operations, or is he the kind of a fellow who goes along trusting that things will take care of themselves?

Is he afraid to delegate authority — or, after doing so, does he undercut his foreman or assistant by going over his head?

This is just a starter. This list undoubtedly  
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Grounds of the new national headquarters of the American Society of Agronomy, being completed in Madison, Wis., were a testing plot for establishing grass quickly. (It put in an appearance, by the way.) In the photo are (l to r): Dr. Edward Engelbert, head of the U. of Wisconsin's soils; Charles O. Finn; Rex Harper; G. H. Chidester; Dr. A. E. Peterson, associate professor of soils at Wisconsin; and Dr. Matthias Stelly, executive secy. of the American Society of Agronomy.

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edly could be expanded to cover the page. The few questions above, however, could serve to determine what the supt's attitude is toward the persons with whom he works and his job. If, in giving honest answers, he flunks this questionnaire, you can be just about 100 per cent sure that he has a labor problem. How could it be avoided?

Many persons who work in a supervisory capacity become too arbitrary. They may begin to demand perfection even though they may not have been perfectionists when they were working as underlings. What they lose sight of is that every job on a course can't be handled perfectly — too many elements are working against it. Another thing to keep in mind is that the perfectionist often is a thief of time. Ninety per cent is well above passing. Why not settle for that?

### Let Them Make Decisions

I am not a psychologist, but I am a great believer in allowing the people under me to make some decisions on their own. The reason: It gives them confidence in me. In the final analysis that is what I want more than anything else. If they mistrust me, or get the impression that I am too demanding, or feel that I don't give them credit for having enough intelligence to do some things on their own, then they are going to start undermining me. When they start that, you have to marvel at their ingenuity, treacherous though it may be.

I have put quite a few things up to my staff simply because there is more than one way of doing most jobs, or more than one sequence for carrying out a series of jobs. By talking over some of these things with your employees, it is surprising to learn how many different operations around a course can be smoothed out. In addition, it gives you an idea of which employees have given their jobs and, for that matter, the whole maintenance operation, more than just casual thought. It tips you off to which men you can depend on in an emergency or when the pressure is on.

Most employees want to be graded as to the kind of work they turn out. If you obviously never pay any attention to them, they are going to start wondering if some bright morning or evening the axe isn't going to be suddenly lowered on them. Either that, or they are going to suspect that you're hidden behind a tree or a clump of bushes and are spying on them.

Why not review the employee's production record frequently. Is he giving you quality work? Does he have the right attitude? Have him fill out a work sheet every day. He may not like it at first,

but eventually he will realize that it saves him having to explain where every minute of the day went in case you ever decide to ask him. Whether he admits it or not, that work sheet makes him feel just a little more secure.

As far as you are concerned the work sheets that employees fill out shouldn't be used for gestapo purposes. You should analyze them with the idea of constantly improving the maintenance operation at your course. And, don't get the idea that you can't do that.

Finally, be frank with the fellows who work for you. If the work sheet or your observations indicate they aren't giving you a reasonably honest day's work, don't hesitate to talk it over with them. Who knows, they may be victims of the schedules you have laid out for them? Maybe they have to hide out back of the fourteenth tee or throttle down that tractor because you haven't assigned them enough work to keep them busy through the day. When you discuss these things with them, be sure it is in private. The only time you should speak where their co-workers can overhear you is when you have something complimentary to say to them.

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