

Guest Editorial

I read with great interest George Cleaver's President Message entitled, "Skilled Employees Need Financial Incentive" in the April, 1978 issue of THE GOLF SUPT. Mr. Cleaver rightfully contended that because of the low wage scale paid by golf courses, skilled employees are hard to find and keep. In other words you get what you pay for. Mr. Cleaver was referring to the employees other than the superintendent in his article. However, I believe that this message should be carried a step further and should relate to the superintendent's position also.

It really irritates me to read the want ads in our trade publications and see something that reads, "Wanted—Golf Course Superintendent for prominent Midwestern 18-hole course; B.S. degree in Agronomy or similar field required; must have at least three years experience as a golf course superintendent; salary range—\$15,000-\$17,500." Do you realize how much \$15,000 equates to in an hourly wage scale? \$7.21, and that's figuring 40 hours a week times 52 weeks a year (I'd love to see the day when a superintendent averages 40 hours a week). Any dumb-dumb can today start at any major factory for at least \$6.50 an hour and can be making more than \$7.00 an hour in a year's time. Plus he gets a full major-medical hospitalization plan, a pension plan, a dental and eye care plan, and who knows how many paid sick days and vacation. Then there is the "skilled tradesmen" such as plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, etc. Let's just say that they average \$10.00 an hour (which is really a low estimate); this equates out to \$20,800 a year.

Then there is the golf superintendent. He is in charge

of 120 acres of land valued in the area of between $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 million dollars. He is responsible for an inventory of machinery worth anywhere from \$50,000 to \$150,000 and chemicals and fertilizer worth \$15,000-\$25,000. He has the capacity to be an agronomist, plumber, electrician, horticulturist, PR man, just to name a few. He delegates authority to a crew of at least ten persons, and his salary is \$15,000. Plus the benefits are definitely not the best. To me that is a crime; actually a salary of only \$20,000 is too low.

The point that I want to make is that I believe we as golf course superintendents are underpaid. Yes, most of us like our jobs because it is a challenge; there is no routine, and it's enjoyable being outdoors, etc. However, as Mr. Cleaver said in his message, "But that doesn't pay the bills."

I hope that a lot of green chairmen in Central Illinois see this editorial. Perhaps they can relate it to their club's situation. Let them ask the questions, "Out of the three positions at their club (club manager, pro, and superintendent), who receives the highest yearly income?" I bet that the majority of answers isn't the golf superintendent. Then ask the question, "Of those three positions, who has been at your club the longest?" The majority of answers to this is probably "the golf superintendent."

Today's golf course superintendent is highly skilled, dedicated professional. Then pay him like one!!!

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