

The Trend in the Greenkeeping Profession

An acute analysis of the greenkeeper's place in the golf field

By B. R. LEACH

Address delivered at the Third Annual Convention of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America at Hotel Statler, Buffalo, February 13-15, 1929



B. R. LEACH

Whose speech at Buffalo attracted wide attention

they have had an effect one way or the other on the greenkeeper, individually and collectively, and we can give the situation of the greenkeeper's status by discussing these events.

In 1920, or thereabouts, the Green Section was formed. There is no doubt that the Green Section has had a pronounced effect on the status of the greenkeeper. There is no doubt that the Green Section has greatly aided the greenkeeper in maintaining his turf.

From a technical angle, and from constant effort and direct contact, the Green Section has had a pronounced influence. Whether this supply of technical information is as great as it might have been is an open question.

There is another angle, to the Green Section influence upon the greenkeeper, which I believe is especially realized by every man here. When the Green Section was formed—to put it bluntly and boldly—the greenkeeper was ignored. I sometimes wonder if the powers that be knew as much then as they know now whether or not that gross mistake would have occurred.

GREENKEEPERS, individually and collectively, are interested in two things. They are interested in the technical side of their profession, by that I refer to the growth of turf, disease control, etc., and naturally they are interested in maintaining and improving their status in the turf maintenance work.

During the past ten years, things have happened, and in each case,

Greenkeeper Was Ignored

BUT at any rate in the formation of the Green Section, the greenkeeper was ignored. That action had two results. In the first place it hurt the greenkeeper—hurt his individual dignity and it hurt his professional standing. I scarcely question whether there is anyone who will contradict me on that point. Another result of this ignoring of the green people in the formation of the Green Section, and the lasting result, has been the formation of a formidable army of amateur greenkeepers.

In ignoring the greenkeeper, the Green Section catered to the Green chairman. It is hardly necessary to bring back to your minds some of the slogans in days gone by in the Green Section. You probably remember that famous slogan—"Come and bring your greenkeeper if you wish."

Now, in ignoring the greenkeeper and catering to the chairman, the situation rose and continued where the greenkeeper was simply submerged, unless by chance he was associated with a club in which the chairman was content to let well enough alone, and let the greenkeeper attend to his business. The greenkeeper through force of necessity became a "yes" man, and when an individual in any business becomes a "yes" man, that business does not prosper the way it should.

Inasmuch as I have known a great many greenkeepers, I think you will bear with me while I make just one criticism of greenkeepers, and this is my criticism. You men know your business. You might say that nobody realizes that any better than we technical men. You know your business, but you keep too damned quiet about it. There's the whole trouble. Now, when I say that college men are getting into this field, and when I say that I think in the long run it may prove a good thing, I have one thing in mind, and that is that you can't keep a

college man quiet! They are not built that way. So that if this situation ultimately becomes a mixture of older, wiser heads, with an influx of young so-called educated, energetic young college men, it is very probable that these young men will exert an influence on your proposition the like of which has never occurred until this time.

It may be you need these college men. They may start something that you could do if you would, or have missed, or whatever you want to call it. In other words, we might apply a little particle of philosophy to this thing. It has been my experience "Everything happens for the best, and every knock is a boost."

I have heard many reasons advanced in support of this army, as I characterize it, of amateur greenkeepers—I have heard many arguments advanced, but I have never heard one advanced yet which would hold water.

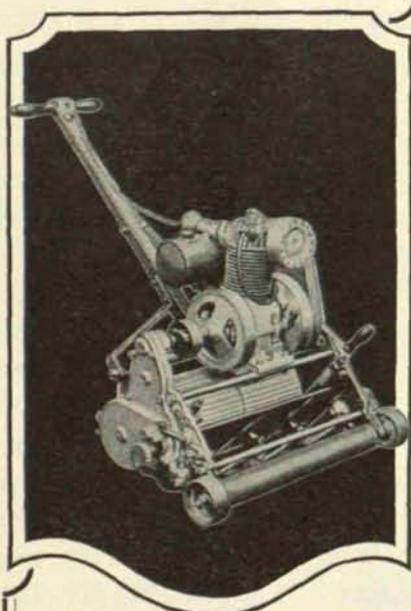
This afternoon you have heard Professor Dickinson.* I hope you will remember what he said about the qualifications of the green-

keeper. After hearing him, I realize that the qualities are even greater than I had previously supposed. Now, if a greenkeeper must have all those qualifications, and it takes all those years of training and work and study to become a greenkeeper, how in the name of Heaven can the chairman, or a chairman of any sort, without all this achievement—serve in the place of the greenkeeper? This situation doesn't lead to any improvement in this business.

Business Interests Neglected

WHEN the Green Section was formed, another phase of turf maintenance work was neglected. I refer to the business interests catering to golf courses. The Green Section has never had adequate funds. They are very frank to tell us that. In other words, the golf courses which have utilized the Green Section have never supported it adequately. Furthermore, they have never given anyone else the credit of supporting it adequately.

*Dr. Dickinson's address was published in the May issue of the National Greenkeeper.



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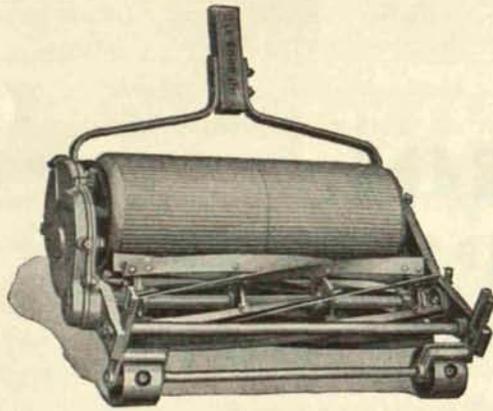
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It may be said that when you admit a business or industry into this organization that business enters in, and that such a thing is necessary in modern times. Industries, research institutions all over the country are beginning to demand more and more funds for the business of research.

In the New Jersey Experiment Station, Dr. Lipman never neglects an opportunity to get money for business of scientific research. If you wanted to know whether money gotten in that way had any influence in the research work, the doctor would simply smile.

As an instance considering the reason lye is used on turf, I will venture to say that if you went to a lye manufacturer, and said:—"Gentlemen, you are not selling any lye to golf courses. Does it occur to you that this subject should be looked into?" they would answer "We should do it for \$5,000."

Business is interested, selfishly interested, and business rarely overlooks an opportunity to make money. I venture to say that had the business interests been considered during these years of Green Section activities, that our progress along the technique of handling turf would be much further advanced.

If I wanted to be a court-house lawyer, I could advance another argument showing the unreasonableness and unfairness of this monopoly of the Green Section activities by the golf clubs. I might say at this point that the ethics of my considering this at a meeting of greenkeepers may be questioned, but I am sure that my code of ethics in this respect is entirely above board and not open to question.

Turf Research Costs Money

IT IS amazing how little the average man in the turf maintenance field, whether he is a business man or greenkeeper or club official—how little he knows regarding the financial status of turf research. As you know—you probably know the Green Section—the golf clubs of this country are financing the Green Section to the extent of \$28,000. Now, for every dollar of that money that the golf clubs put up—five or possibly ten dollars

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were put up for turf research by other institutions, and I refer mainly to the federal and state governments. The Green Section couldn't last two weeks on \$28,000.

As an instance of where the money comes from for this research, I can give no better instance than my own work on grubs. The discovery and the working out of the lead arsenate method cost every penny of \$100,000. You must appreciate the fact that the first five years of that time, my salary list covering myself, three technical assistants, and two workmen was well over \$10,000 a year, to say nothing of the thousand and one things that enter into the research all the time.

Now, of that \$100,000, the contribution of the Green Section of the golf clubs of this country was \$2,500. A little bit of golf club money going in, but it would not last five minutes without the tremendous sums of money from the government. As the Green Section is now organized, a little group of bankers acting for the clubs control the Green Section. They control its activities. They control its program. You know bankers are clever men. We have an apt instance right here, \$28,000 controlling five times that amount of money.

So when any question is made regarding my code of ethics in bringing up this question, I simply say the golf clubs of this country are putting in \$28,000, but you and I, as citizens, are putting in all the balance. Therefore, it would seem logical and only fair that some of the pre-conceived and set ideas of the Green Section might be very wisely modified.

The greenkeeper has a great deal at stake on this point. To the greenkeeper, turf is a living—his means of income. To the greenkeeper, it is a hobby and a side line—not a vocation. Whether turf lives or dies, whether turf continues or stops, they will go right on making money in the banking and insurance business just the same. The influence of these things on the greenkeeper are paramount.

Until the greenkeeper—until the business interests catering to golf are given adequate representation on the Board of Direc-

tors of the Green Section, we will never progress at the pace we should.

Now a talk of this sort five years ago—or four years ago (How long is it, Mr. McGregor? A. Three and one half years.) four years ago would have been just as valuable as practically nothing. But the greenkeepers are now organized. You have some means of giving them information. I don't suggest anything drastic. I believe these golf clubs and Green Section officials are essentially fair-minded. I think that's a fair statement to make. But the great difficulty is that their education has been neglected along certain lines, and I would most certainly suggest that this organization begin the rather difficult task of awakening them to a sense of their responsibilities and a sense of what is most efficient, just, and right.

Now, before I left home, my wife, who is of the cautious type, said to me: "When you get up there, for God's sake, keep quiet about service bureaus. The subject is loaded with dynamite." But fortunately the madam isn't here!

So I shall exercise my freedom as a free-born white man to do as I please.

It is very easy to see the fundamental theory of a service bureau from the viewpoint of golf club officials. To their mind, the Service Bureau simplifies their job of purchasing, and it cheapens the cost of their supplies, so that there was every reason that Service Bureaus should be permitted. From an impersonal angle, I have learned some very significant and enlightening things about these Service Bureaus.

Let me give you an illustration.

All of us are finding our lives lengthened, our pleasures increased, by these individuals, whom we sometimes think of as impractical. As far as doing our work is concerned, they are no more impractical than we would be in doing theirs. They are filling a very worthy place in society, which we cannot commence to estimate in money or comfort.

It is only when we work with them, and tell them what we have found out in our practical work, and then accept and apply what they have found in their work, do

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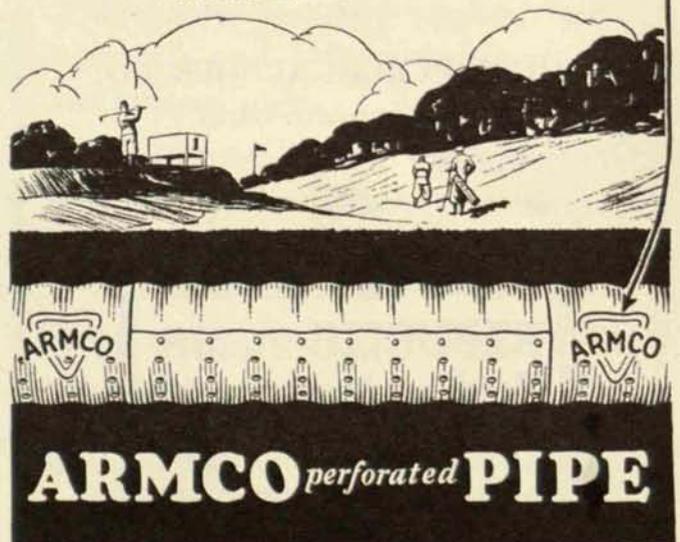
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How Service Bureaus Operate

A COUPLE of weeks ago, I went to see a friend of mine who is in the golf supply business. He was called out on business, and I was sitting there, smoking one of his cigars, and looking over a copy of the Police Gazette. Everything was quiet and peaceful. Suddenly the telephone rang. The clerk went to the phone, answering: "Yes, this is so-and-so Service. Yes, we have some very good and durable rakes for \$1.35." He spoke this into the phone.

There was a little interruption while the other party talked. "Oh! we can supply rakes at 85c also. Two dozen?" He took the order down and cursed a little under his breath. The incident aroused me from my perusal of the magazine, and I said: "Jack, it's none of my business, but would you mind telling me who that was?" "That was Lillian Russell of the Hoboken Service Bureau." "What was the difficulty?" "She said she could get plenty of rakes for 85c." That was interesting to me.

I said: "Do you mind letting me look at those rakes? I use a great many in the course of a year. If you have some real rakes for 85c, I am in the market." He took me in the back room, and pulled out one of these rakes. For 85c it was a good rake. But it wasn't the kind of rake that we would ordinarily buy. In the first place, it had a poor handle. You know when you use a rake of that nature all day, it knocks into your hands. The teeth had never been milled. They were rough as cast. It would be much more difficult to pull grass from them than from a rake with a smooth and milled tooth. This rake had the customary curve in the line of the teeth of a cheap rake. This interested me very much.

"Jack," I said, "do you sell very many of these 85c rakes." "Yes, we do, we sell a good many other service bureaus." The greenkeeper wouldn't buy a rake like that. He knows they are not a good buy at 85c which I consistently say, and which is true with us in my nursery.

If that incident is typical of the service bureau situation, there are one or two significant things disclosed. In the first place, the club isn't getting what the greenkeeper should have, so that the greenkeeper is greatly affected by the service bureau movement. In the second place, the unsurmountable argument for the service bureau is saving—cheaper buying. Answering that, I submit to you that that incident, if it is indicative of conditions, is not cheaper buying. It is more expensive buying, as any man in business or running a golf course knows.

I doubt if many clubs realize this condition. I think some do. I have heard, if what I have heard is true, that there is some pulling away from service bureaus. Now, it would appear that if the service bureau is to prosper—if the service bureau is to continue as a factor in the turf maintenance game, it might possibly be better to give competitive business a better break, and to confine the buying on a basis of quality as well as price.

Now, I hope to live to see the day when the greenkeeper runs the course. I hope to live to see the day when his chairman is simply a sort of curb on expenditures, a sort of balance wheel which will help to keep the greenkeeper on an even footing. I hope to see the day when the professional and amateur greenkeeper are touring around the course as a combination.

There is a club in Philadelphia, the Aronomik Country Club. They have made a decidedly new development in maintaining their club. I understand that they have simply eliminated the "Green Committee." Simply voted it out of existence. The greenkeeper has to handle the situation, be responsible for the running of the course, responsible for the buying, and once a month he has to report to the President or the Board of Directors. I offer that we propose to watch that experiment with a great deal of interest and watch its progress and from time to time get some idea of how it is going. When the time comes that the greenkeeper is such that the maintenance is left to him, then the greenkeeper will come into his own.



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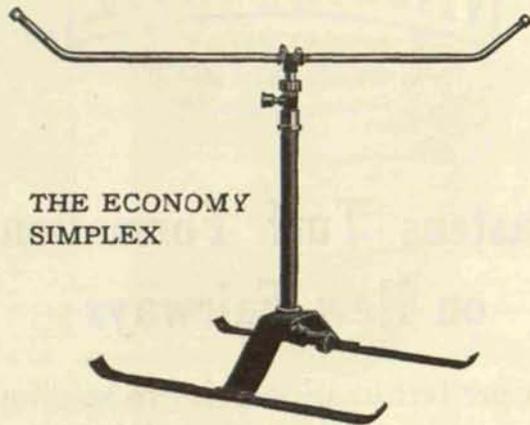
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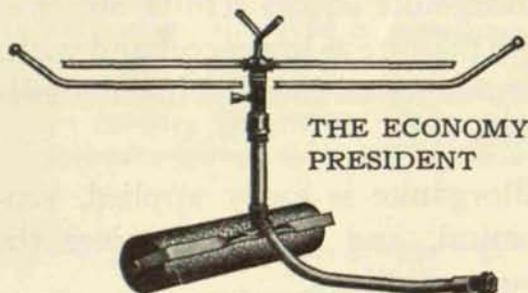
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About the College Man

JUST one other little point I want to bring up and I am through. There has been a great deal of talk lately among greenkeepers about the college man.

Now, any man who has served a four year term in one of our so-called higher institutions of learning is fully aware of the fact that a certain percentage of our college professors are partially or entirely full of bull. On the other hand, a certain percentage of these men are unusually capable. One of my old professors in Cornell is a man of this type. I am much reminded of him in hearing Professor Dickinson. This professor had a streak of humor in his cosmos, and one morning when he had had a fight with his wife at the breakfast table, he came to class and delivered barrels of wisdom to we young hyenas. I will never forget a little oration he gave us one morning. He began this way.

"Now, gentlemen, before we continue our discussion on the economics of the cotton crop, I propose to give you a short discourse on the whys and wherefores of this and that.

"Your mamas and papas send you here four years, pay all the bills, and you live the 'life of Riley.' You are sent here to learn to be farmers, agriculturists, or what not. Fortunately for posterity and the states of the union, most of you will develop into bond or automobile salesmen, because of the small percentage of you who eventually gravitate back to the farms are going to be a disappointment to your parents and society at large.

"Agricultural is three per cent science and ninety-seven per cent business. We can teach you in a measure the three per cent science, but," he said, "we can't teach you the ninety-seven per cent business. In other words, you can't make a silk purse out of a fertilizer bag."

As I say, it is almost twenty years since that occurred, but I have never forgotten it. It was with that idea in mind that I made those remarks yesterday about the percentage of "jack-asses" among college men. We college men don't kid ourselves. Certain factions do kid themselves. We have had cor-

response recently which shows that so clearly that there is no doubt of it. You know city men dominate golf clubs, and the city man naturally knows city conditions, but he doesn't know other conditions—he doesn't have the faintest conception of what goes into any question in which soil is involved.

Professor Dickinson is maintaining his ten week course for greenkeepers. It is tragic that he can't at the same time run ten one week courses to teach Green chairmen the error of their ways.

Now, the entrance of the college man into green-keeping is something I don't feel personally should be blocked. I have known a great many greenkeepers in my time, and as a class they are a very interesting type of men to know. They are strictly individual, independent, resourceful, and in every way worth cultivating. They are a type of men typically American.

More About the Seed Markets—Chewings

Fescue Crop Poor

By E. E. PATTISON

IT IS expected that the market on Rough Stalk Meadowgrass and Wood Meadowgrass will be much higher. No new crop seed will reach here in time for Fall planting and stocks on hand of both articles are exceptionally small.

At this time of the year there is a natural interest in the 1929 crop of Chewings fescue and the early shipments from New Zealand or in other words those made during May and June will arrive in time for Fall planting.

The quality of the 1929 crop of fescue will not be as good as that of the 1928 crop. This is due to unfavorable climatic conditions existing at the time of harvest. In the wholesale market there has been quite a fluctuation in price.

The market opened low, went to a high level as the result of an unusual brisk American demand and during the last three weeks has receded somewhat. Based on the average price at which American importers have bought Chewings it is safe to say that the price this coming Fall will be approximately the

(Concluded on page 34)

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