

FEBRUARY  
1932  
VOLUME VI  
NUMBER II

# The NATIONAL GREENKEEPER

Official Organ of The  
National Association  
of Greenkeepers of  
America

## Our Job

The Relationship of the Greenkeeper to present economic conditions

By L. J. FESER

*Read at the 6th Annual Educational Conference of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America, held at New York City, January 19-22.*

**I**N THE minds of many business men today, the job of painting a picture of our present economic condition is a simple one. Their formula is to choose a deep, black, hopeless color and smear it over the canvas. Unemployment, passed up dividends, high taxes and uncertainty of the future are common topics of discussion. Political efforts to solve the problem seem to be getting nowhere. World finances are tied in knots, and every day we see some one dig up a deeper and more hopeless color to paint the picture.

Everyone talks about the depression, but like Mark Twain's remark about the weather, "we don't do anything about it." Most of us are looking for something to happen that will change the situation. We are "sitting tight" hoping that some unheard of genius will pop out of some place, do some sort of hokus-pokus, and bring back a period of normal business. In the meantime we look at our reduced budgets, sharpen our pencils and figure out how to make seventy-five cents do the job that a dollar used to do.

If we figure out that little problem to our own satisfaction, we feel that our task is completed. Let someone else worry about where the seventy-five cents is going to come from. Let a wiser head work out a solution for the economic problem. That, in our minds, is not part of our job.

I am not an economist, but I know that no one



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man, no one profession, or no one industry can carry us back to the days of ample employment or regular dividend checks. But I am sure that when enough men of every vocation in every land will think clearly and act wisely, this nightmare will end, and at that time we will look back at this period and wonder how we could have been so pessimistic, or how we could have been so foolish.

The job of bringing back better times is not a task of the other fellow alone. We may look to the members of our clubs as leaders in professions and industries to get us out of the rut, but until we put our own shoulders to the wheels, the old horses are not going to be able to pull us out. It is going to be a

job—but compared with some of the jobs that have faced the American people in past years, it is going to be a very pleasant one.

### LOOKING BACK A FEW YEARS

**L**ET us look back a few years to a time when we were called upon to do a big job. We were called upon to win a war. The contract was a miserable, gruesome one. It involved the killing and maiming of other humans, the destruction of billions of dollars worth of property, and untold value in beauty and character.

There was a black picture for you. And when the job was done, nations looked at the graves and the debts, and economists told us of the tremen-

dous loss. They told us what the dead could have done had they lived, and how many desirable things we could have had by using the wealth destroyed. But we did it.

How different is the job that we are called upon to do today! The outcome of the battle against the present condition is certain to be glorious in the true sense of the word. Instead of causing starvation we are called upon to eliminate starvation. Instead of piling up debts for our people and industries to pay, we should be busy creating wealth and beauty for everyone to enjoy. It is our pleasant duty to provide opportunity for people to enjoy health and beauty rather than to destroy character and cripple bodies.

This may seem to be somewhat removed from the subject of maintaining golf courses. You may ask how one can devote time and thought to the solution of such a tremendous problem, and at the same time carry on a work that demands so many hours of every day. As individuals it seems that there is nothing that you or I can do about it. I am going to try to point out a few things that we as greenkeepers can do.

#### WHAT THE GREENKEEPERS CAN DO

AS AN individual acting for my club, I employ at certain seasons from ten to sixteen men. Some of these men are married and have families. At the height of the season my club, through my agency, is providing support to at least 50 men, women and children. As my club provides other outlets for activity in addition to golf, I will acknowledge the fact that this is above the average number supported by the average club.

I have made some careful estimates, and find that it is safe to say that over 70,000 people are dependent upon the maintenance of golf courses in the United States. Add to that figure the army of salesmen, servicemen, factory workers and office men and their families that depend upon our purchases of equipment, fertilizers, chemicals, supplies and other items, and you are running up a big total.

When we buy a tractor or a sprinkler, we indirectly benefit miners, railroadmen, steel companies, and—well, carry it along as far as you like. I cannot purchase a single item for my club without helping someone somewhere. I am not here to advocate that every club should now buy a fleet of tractors or a trainload of fertilizer. But I do advocate the junking of obsolete equipment and hay-

wire systems, and urge that every greenkeeper check his system of maintenance so that he can stand before his chairman and prove that his request for a new piece of equipment or order for fertilizer is based on sound reasoning.

Speaking of equipment, I dislike the term "labor saving." I believe that if I purchase a machine that will enable one man to do the work that two men did before, I would call that machine a "labor-making" machine. That sounds paradoxical, but it is not. Such machine is a producer of wealth. That is perfectly obvious if we accept the correct meaning of the word wealth. Wealth is an abundance of anything desirable. How many desirable things can you think of that are not the product of brains and labor?

If our machines can do more and better work than can be done by hand labor, that hand labor may be applied to do some work that as yet no machine can do. If we utilize that hand labor properly, and use our machines wisely, our golf courses are going to look a lot better in proportion to the number of dollars spent.

#### NO GOLF COURSE IS PERFECT

IN comparison with most of you gentlemen, I am new at the maintenance game. But in my eleven years of this type of work I have visited golf courses in nearly all parts of the United States and some in Canada, and I have yet to see a perfect golf course. I know that there is no golf course in this country or in any other country that could not be improved upon.

Men, more capable than I, have told you, or will tell you, at this meeting, how to make some improvements on your courses. If you will utilize some of the hands that have been displaced by machinery to bring about these improvements, you will be adding wealth to your club, and you will be helping to solve the unemployment problem, and you will be adding to your own personal efficiency. You will find as I have found that the term "labor-saving equipment" should very obviously be changed to "wealth-producing equipment."

A few days ago I presented this line of argument to a very practical-minded friend of mine. He looked at me with a twinkle in his eye, waited politely until I stopped talking, and then he said in a quiet, serious tone:

"That is all very nice. Now you tell me how

members of any club are going to bear the cost of your system in the light of present economic conditions. What members of every club want today is a notice that the dues of the club have been lowered. They are not particularly interested in making improvements when they are having difficulty meeting the present dues."

That seemed a very fair and very important question. I could answer only by asking another question. How can any club member sell his product when half of the prospective purchasers will not buy because they will not spend the money, and the other half cannot buy because they have no money to spend? It gets back to that damnable cycle that everybody talks about, but few are willing to try to break.

We are at this meeting primarily to learn all that we can about maintenance economy. I believe that when anyone carries economy to the point of being pennywise and pound-foolish, he is making a very grave mistake. Let us take two articles that are a standard part of our modern existence, and found an illustration upon these articles. One is tobacco, the other is golf. I could add many other articles, but choose to use these two.

#### SUPPOSE WE ELIMINATE TOBACCO AND GOLF

**I**F WE work the saving end of economy to the last ditch, there is no reason why we should use tobacco or play golf. Neither is a necessity to life. But let us think of what would happen if everyone junked their golf clubs, and discarded tobacco. No golf courses to increase property value in a community, no one employed to maintain, not one employed to make balls, clubs, mowers, tractors, sprinklers or any other equipment now used by golf clubs.

Tobacco plantations used to swell the cotton surplus. Publishers closing out because of lack of tobacco advertising. Retailers closing shop, millions of people thrown back to the production of the necessities of life, in competition with those who are already having a hard time making the production of necessities yield a respectable living. Add the fact that no one could know the pleasure of a fine mellow smoke or no one could experience the thrill of driving a ball down a beautiful sunlit fairway or drop a putt across thirty feet of carpet-like velvet turf.

A very brilliant writer a short time ago said that

in the production of machines to do our work, we have created a bigger horse than we can ride. Naturally, if we can use machines to do the major part in creating the necessities of life, we ought to have more time to enjoy the pleasures of life. To enjoy the wealth offered by the pleasures of life, we enable someone else to live by creating the means of such pleasure. They in turn are enabled to purchase the necessities and some of the luxuries, and by their paid purchases enable some company somewhere to pay a stock dividend. We have got to learn to ride the horse in that manner, and when we have learned the lesson it will be better for all of us, from industrial leader to the man who mows the greens.

#### MAKE EVERY DOLLAR PRODUCE 100% VALUE

**I**N CLOSING I must say this: the best economy in the world is to make every dollar granted to you in the form of a budget produce 100 cents worth of value, 100 cents worth of beauty and wealth, 100 cents worth of satisfaction for your club members. It is your privilege to try to get as large a budget as you possibly can, but base your request on practical foresight and knowledge of your job. Use your ability to get an adequate budget, and when you do get it, remember that your personal and professional responsibility is a heavy one.

When the year is over be prepared to meet with your chairman, lay your figures and the picture of your accomplishment on his desk; have the feeling in your heart that you have used your innermost ability to satisfy him and the members of your club, and that you have used your position in life to help your fellowmen. That, in the most high and honorable sense of the word, is our job.

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