

# PROS AND CONS OF SECESSION

**H**ENRY LONGHURST, the British golf writer, stirred up a storm with a column he wrote from New York this fall in which he questioned the advisability of maintaining uniform Rules of Golf in Great Britain and the United States.

The column, entitled "Should We Secede?", seemed to us to present such an exaggerated picture of golf in this country and to strike such a blow at the uniform code which we feel has worked for the best interests of golf that Isaac B. Grainger, President of the USGA, was constrained to reply.

## *What Longhurst Wrote*

"Three years ago, amid general rejoicing in which I certainly joined, the Royal and Ancient and the United States Golf Association arrived at a common set of Rules, involving concessions cheerfully made on both sides. One of these has led to unforeseen changes in the playing of golf which have already had deplorable results at home but which in America have to be experienced to be believed.

"I refer to the abolishing of the stymie. All that anyone intended was that, if my ball was in your way, you could ask me to move it. As a magnanimous corollary, however, they added that I could also move it if I felt it to be of possible advantage to you. . . . This has led by easy insidious stages to a state where the nearer ball is almost automatically picked up and marked. . . .

"This not only offends the cardinal principle of golf, that the ball shall be played where it lies, but also takes an unconscionable amount of time. . . .

"Since, as a member of the Rules of Golf Committee freely admitted, it was foreseen by none, it ought at once to be changed, with or without the agreement of the USGA, which in any case would take some time to obtain.

"In fact, with much regret I think the time has come to go our own way in golf

again without in any way being tied to the Americans. . . .

"I have the greatest respect for the devoted band of individuals who make up the USGA. Most of them, I believe, see eye to eye with us but their task is an almost impossible one. . . . Of five million American golfers, many have only the vaguest idea of the Rules. Others know some of the Rules but observe them only when it suits. To tee your ball up because you don't like the lie is common practice in almost every American club at which I have played. . . ."

## *Grainger's Reply*

". . . It is indeed surprising that one who has so often professed an interest in international golf would advocate a course of action which could only result in its elimination.

"I do not know where you have played golf in America, but it is obvious that your remarks are not wholly accurate. . . .

"You apparently attribute the American ills to abolition of the stymie. The impetus for total abolition did not spring from us during our conferences in 1951 with representatives of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, but we were a party to the mutual recognition that the stymie rule was being ignored around the world. It so happens that I favor the old Rule, but offsetting this is my awareness that tradition alone cannot make it enforceable. . . .

"We have always stood for tradition in golf where it is significant, but tradition for tradition's own sake can be stultifying. We also believe that a world code for golf and worldwide observance are worth striving for. What is disturbing to us is that your article is detrimental to that aim. In golf, as in all matters involving human relations, we do not believe that isolationism provides the appropriate answer. . . ."