

cism. The committee's chief functions necessarily should be in the areas in which they individually or collectively have expertise, such as communications, equipment, and labor relations.

By coordinating and supplementing the talents of the Green Superintendent and his

Committee with the consultant and educational services made available through agronomy centers, along with the USGA Green Section Visiting Service and retaining a golf course architect can't help but lead to a much better, economically sound golf course operation.

Labor on the Golf Course

by JAMES L. HOLMES

Keeping labor expenditures in line, increasing labor productivity, and still maintaining playing conditions without player inconvenience is to be expected of the modern golf course superintendent. Today's maintenance programs have to be precise. Firm decisions must be made and expedited. Final results must be constructive and any errors corrected immediately.

Demands made by the golfing membership often either hamper, prevent, or delay necessary programs. Therefore, continuing long range programs are necessary to cope with existing problems before new ventures are attempted. Thorough knowledge of budgets, personnel, equipment, and communications are key factors in understanding expenditures. The responsibility, organization and facilitation of these programs is the business of the golf course superintendent.

Labor is the greatest expense in each golf course operation; polls report that labor accounts for between 60 and 75 per cent of the cost. In order to keep this large expenditure within reasonable limits, the golf course superintendent has to think as an owner and perform as the chief administrator, regardless of the size of his operation. Productivity through manpower then is the most important facet of any golf course operation.

To receive the most productivity from an employee, the workman must be aware of what is expected of him. He must know how to do the job in question. He must know the standards that are set for each particular job. It is important that he carry out his duties because he wants to, and can take pride in accomplishment.

Train the Employee

When an employee starts work it is important that he complete the job the way it should be done. Perhaps this is the first time the man has worked on a golf course. Work patterns, as they are first developed, are relatively easy to alter. If bad or wasteful habits are developed over a period of time, they are harder to break. Considerable effort is necessary to train competent employees.

The employee's job is "production oriented," while the superintendent's job is "people oriented." The superintendent must create an environment in which his men can reach maximum production. The superintendent must provide all the equipment and facilities that are required to complete a job, and he must pay a reasonable wage.

In that labor management and communication are the greatest challenges to a successful superintendent, these challenges must be conquered before other phases of turf maintenance and management programs fall into line. The superintendent must continue to educate himself, his employees and his membership.

Other pertinent phases of "labor on the golf course" must also be considered. How many men are required to maintain a normal 18-hole golf course in the "cool-grass" region of the United States and Canada? Obviously, this will vary from course to course, depending upon many factors, such as size of the layout, demands of the membership, and demands of the superintendent himself. However, regardless of the number of employees, if they do not have the desire to work be-

cause of inadequate wages, lack of proper supervision or for some other reason, there is no possible way effectively to reduce labor expenditures.

Size of the Crew

Ten to 12, and occasionally 16 to 20 men are employed on most 18-hole golf courses during the season. A consideration by each superintendent must be, "can six or seven (or less) year-round, well-trained and competent employees accomplish as much?" This approach has been tried at a number of golf courses. This is difficult to accomplish because it is almost impossible to keep six or seven men productively employed during the winter. Furthermore, there is always a need on a well-maintained 18-hole golf course, for a number greater than six to seven sometime during the active golf-playing season. As a result, practically all golf course superintendents depend upon a nucleus of from two to four well-trained competent men, and employ seasonal or part-time help during the season. Obviously these permanent employees are the highest paid with one or two being retained on a salary basis. Golf course superintendents expect at least a 15-20 per cent salary increase demand this coming year from their employees. Not only is a significant increase in the hourly wage rate a consideration, but permanent club employees are becoming more interested in such things as retirement benefits, hospitalization, insurance and other side issues which fulfill the basic human desire for security.

Permanent employees are usually selected either from new men who have had previous experience in golf course work, or by retaining a part-time employee who shows an interest in turf work and has proved to be a competent man during his seasonal labor.

Sources of Seasonal Help

Seasonal help is obtained as follows:

1. "Walk-ins" off the street.
2. Through advertising in local newspapers and advertising by word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth advertising includes the word being spread by former employees, currently employed men and club members or other persons familiar with the superintendent and know of some particular individual looking for a job.

3. Contacts at colleges and high schools.
4. Through the caddie master by simply requesting that he direct two or three of his better caddies to the superintendent.
5. Itinerant labor. These men have proved to be competent, trustworthy, and excellent adjuncts to the labor force for a number of years. At the present time it can be estimated that 30 per cent of the entire golf course labor force in the greater Chicago area is composed of itinerant laborers.

In addition to the nucleus of permanent employees, seasonal help can be divided into two categories. Those who are employed for eight or nine months and those who are employed for three months.

The eight- or nine-month group are primarily itinerant workers; the three-month group are high school and college students. Many high school and college students can and are employed yearly, for from four to eight years. Some of these men become well-trained, dependable, and valuable employees.

At least once during every year an emergency arises and extra workmen are needed. Superintendents normally obtain such workers through temporary employment agencies or by hiring a number of caddies temporarily. Further, if the emergency situation should exist at one club only, perhaps previous to or during a large tournament, workers can be "borrowed" from other golf courses.

Labor expense for a typical work week can be quite easily determined. Most normal golf course operations require that all employees work 48 hours during the golf season. The work week load reduces to 40 hours during the off season. Therefore, if the size of the crew and the wage rate for each individual employee is known, the amount of money required during any given week or period of time for operation of the golf course can be determined.

A Look at the Future

What can be expected in the future regarding "labor on the golf course," or what is the overall outlook? This has been discussed with many golf course superintendents, Chairmen of Green Committees and other involved persons. There is general agreement

that if cost of labor can be held in line or held at the current total expenditure rather than constantly increasing, the situation is livable. But if the wage rate continues to escalate or the total number of employees increase, it seems that the only logical way to maintain golf courses as we now know them is through mechanization. This mechanization is machine, chemical, biological and architectural.

MACHINE

A significant increase in mechanization has already taken place. Such things as automatic irrigation systems, multiple mowing machines and the use of helicopters for applying such things as fertilizers and pesticides are a few. Obviously, considerably more innovations are forthcoming. Such things as air flotation equipment for transportation and mowing grass with a sound wave principle are being currently considered.

CHEMICAL

Even though tremendous strides have been made in this area through rapid and inexpensive weed control, disease control and other pest regulation, greater advancements are on the drawing board. In the future, it may be possible to control one specific type of plant or weed in a given population; limit growth, including height of a specific plant or increase growth as desired; or apply a chemical to a given soil which will encourage desirable physical reactions. These are only a few items under consideration. We can expect

tremendous strides in the chemical mechanization field in the future.

BIOLOGICAL

There is a rapid increase in the availability of more desirable-type plants at the present time. Improved *Poa Annua's* are currently available, a number of research agencies are investigating improved bentgrasses, and biological control of various pests is being studied. Perhaps the most overall advancement in the golf-turf labor field can be gained through biological advancement.

ARCHITECTURAL

If other turf management operations are effectively mechanized in order to hold "labor on the golf course" in line, design must be such that all facets of mechanization can be applied to a "designed" piece of property. Obviously a course can be built or rebuilt which requires considerable hand labor to maintain properly. Such courses can be and usually are a pleasure to play and an interesting challenge. But they are expensive to keep. In areas where labor costs are becoming prohibitive, care must be exercised so that mechanization of operation is possible through correlated design.

The time has arrived when soaring labor costs on golf courses simply must be stopped if we expect to play golf as we know it. If we properly use technology available today and keep abreast of new developments, it is possible that increases in labor expenditures for golf course maintenance have reached their zenith, or actually may begin to decrease.



James L. Holmes

JAMES L. HOLMES RESIGNS

James L. Holmes, Mid-Continent Director of the USGA Green Section, recently announced his resignation. He has been with the Green Section since 1957 and pioneered the Visiting Service Program in the Mid-Western states. He intends to enter private business.