

UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION GREEN SECTION WESTERN OFFICE



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• Western Turfletter •

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O U T L O O K 1957

For the same reason that the nation's top businessmen scan the 1957 economic forecasts, so progressive golf course Superintendents find it to their advantage to check the nation's agricultural outlook and business trends. Good management means sound planning. By mapping your program now, it may be possible for you to make more effective use of your budget, produce better year 'round golfing turf for your members, and increase your value to the Club.

Industry

With all of the facts in, 1956 proved to be the greatest economic year in our country's history. A search of forecasts for 1957 show that business activity is likely to move further ahead in the coming months. It should prove to be the best year ever. Some look for a leveling off period during the last half, but all forecasters are unanimous and optimistic for 1957.

Industry's program for expansion and modernization is under a full head of steam. Indeed, the biggest news of 1956 was not consumer spending, but the splurge of the U.S. businessman. In addition, the nation is spending nearly 5 billion dollars yearly on research and development activities that should pay off in future years. A huge nationwide program of highway construction is scheduled to start in 1957 and the demand for schools and other public buildings will reach new heights. All signs point to continued economic growth.

Golf

In the world of golf, interest has never been greater. The United States Department of Commerce estimates that \$350,000,000. was spent last year for this sport. The figure is based on club dues, fees and playing expenditures at private and public courses. Since golf is played on grass, a large part of this money is under the direct control of the nation's golf course Superintendents. As professional men, it is their duty to handle their funds wisely, obtaining the greatest return for each dollar spent. One of the ways to accomplish this is by keeping abreast of the fast changing labor, equipment and market conditions. Here, too, your USGA Regional Turf Service Program hopes to be of service.

Labor Outlook

For the present, the U.S. economy seems to be outgrowing its labor force. Despite an addition of 900,000 new workers in 1956, good men were harder to find. A recent survey of 70 companies in Connecticut found one job unfilled for every eleven taken. The average pay of U.S. workers reached a new high last December of \$2.05 an hour. Nevertheless, reasonable wage hikes will be necessary if workers expect to stay even with the rising cost of living (stable for 3 years, but up 2.4% in 1956). With record national income and spending, a few forecasters believe the present price line will be held. Inflation is of utmost concern to the economic planners.

The labor squeeze is on and yet golf clubs with sound management may find an answer. Several courses throughout the country have taken the following steps and found them effective in "Obtaining top results at minimum cost":

1. Reduce the maintenance crew but increase wages. Only productive and dependable men should be employed. They receive good pay, have permanent work and benefits comparable to competing industry.
2. The efficient management of such a crew by the Superintendent is essential.
3. Maintain all equipment in top condition at all times. Employ every labor saving device available.

In summary, inefficient labor, equipment and management is always costly -- it will be too costly to tolerate in 1957.

Machinery

Price tags on equipment will reflect wage and steel increases. New demands for steel are now being made by the nation's shipbuilders and shortages may result. A slight rise, from 4% to 6% over 1956 prices is in effect on most agricultural machinery. Look for new golf course equipment to appear, designed for the more efficient use of labor. New machines will require smarter, better trained people, however.

Freight Rates

Always of concern to Westerners, transportation costs loom even larger in 1957. Despite hikes in freight rates last year, the rail income slump continues. Western railroads may ask ICC for a 17% raise in addition to last year's 5% increase. The possibility exists that another freight increase will price many products right out of the far western market.

Others

Irrigation companies state that their prices are now stable for the year, although up slightly (1 to 4%) over 1956. Supply is good; demand high. Rubber and plastic hose prices are expected to remain the same.

Efficient farmers know that February and March are the months for ordering their fertilizer supply. This is good business for the Superintendent too. Fertilizer prices are slightly lower at the factory, but freight rates may cause the 'delivered' price to be up. This is another reason for purchasing your fertilizer supply now.

Fungicide and insecticide prices are stable and no increase expected over 1956. Mercury, used in many fungicides, remains under government control and prices are subject to change. A supply should be on hand.

The grass seed picture is fairly steady with a tendency to rise in some areas as the season progresses. Again Seaside bent may be in short supply by mid-summer. Home owner demand for Merion bluegrass may be less in 1957, making more available to golf courses. Pennross bent will remain tight, but enough available for a test plot in your nursery. The price range is from \$10. to \$12. a pound. Wherever tested, Pennross has proven superior to Seaside and should be under your observation.

Wrapping It Up

From Denver to 'Frisco; Bellingham to San Diego, one observation stands out: Where good golfing turf was maintained, more and more players came out to enjoy the great game of golf in 1956.

Superintendents have a responsibility to maintain this record. Now is the time to point out the need (backed by facts) for any necessary new equipment, new barns, irrigation systems, etc., to Club Officials. The outlook is bright. The future belongs to those who prepare for it.

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Never Thought of It That Way

"When is a golf course not a golf course?" No one seemed to have an answer. Then Carl Bloomfield, Supervisor of the Rose Bowl and Pasadena's Brookside Golf Course, furnished us with the solution: "--When it becomes a parking lot every New Years Day! We park 20,000 cars on our two courses during every Rose Bowl game. You're fortunate to come within 100 yards of the first tee, should you be looking for it on January 1."

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"Through indecision opportunity is often lost"

- Publilius

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