

T H E C L U B S C E N E

DOLLARS AND CENTS - THE CONTROL THEREOF

A drastic change has come over the Licensed Club Field in New South Wales over the past few years, and it is becoming a tougher business to operate.

The "Salad Days" are gone - club administrators are called upon to be the Butcher, the Baker, the Candlestick maker - no longer can the Manager like the Publican of old, disport himself in "Weskit" and gold watch chain over his ample stomach - no longer can the Manager knock off a noggin' or two with the myriad representatives of "wines or wares" who call every day - no longer can the Board Room Boys carry a large supply of "free grog" in the Board Room fridge.

Now its work, work, work and more work to show a percentage that has some degree of respectability - the easy come, easy go attitude must now be replaced with a "now its time for all good men to come to the aid of the party".

Clubs which do not put themselves on a hard line, efficient basis are gone - clubs which do not orientate their views with the present trends are gone.

Of course, clubs are for members and their guests. Of course, they are meant to create an "atmosphere", but the choice "delicacies" of almost personalised attention are now not for these times - members must be co-opted to accept the change and help the situation - even signs seeking their co-operation helps, viz, "Please help us reduce costs - bring your empty glasses back to the bar".

Members must be asked to use the bars more - members must be asked to accept what could be called "Little inconveniences". Members must help reduce waste and accept the responsibility of looking after the club interests.

There are a "million ways" to save - reducing waste, reducing unnecessary movement and overlapping - indirect costs are enormous in this industry - indirect

Wastage is tremendous - telephone bills are astronomical - it has been the "in thing" for staff of all grades to make private phone calls "on the house" - stationery misuse should be eliminated, e.g., messages written on unused printed envelopes - printed club letterheads used by scribblers and doodlers. Ball point pens - there is a salient cost factor - it wouldn't be unrealistic to state that school age sons or daughters of many in the club movement haven't ever bought a ball point. Long private conversations by staff on all levels which hold up business and of course are costly - long discussions with travellers and representatives which take time, and time is money.

Empty glasses on tables and poker machines - glasses are a tremendous cost factor - empty ones are vulnerable to breakage. Dirty ashtrays frighten customers - dirty floors give an unfavourable reaction to potential customers, members or visitors.

Sloppily served drinks cause wastage, and the overall amount of lost "grog" in Sydney clubs would fill the Warragamba Dam - the fallacy of having to pour it out quickly is obvious when a seconds delay would stop any spillover.

Toilets are another heavy cost area, and to see mounds of used paper towels causes one to weep.

Staff - unless the "top cats" set the example, its no good saying that "Joe Blow" or "Mary Blow" is bludging. This group, Secretary Manager, Assistant Secretary Managers, Sub-Assistant Managers and Catering Managers etc., must all show a loyalty and enthusiasm beyond the normal call of duty, and this will rub off.

Entertainment must be looked at on a return basis, and charges made as in many clubs.

You can't have entertainment costing seven or eight hundred bucks on a free basis unless there are other sections to carry the cost, e.g., to give a chance of a recoup, a club would require over 100 poker machines available - you must budget on about one-third willing to have a fling.

Steward service - absolutely uneconomical unless a charge of one "buck" a middy is made - a time and motion study revealed the impossibility of this situation, unless all steward staff are in the super class, or every sale is a schooner - small self-service bars are the thing - members will use them for quicker service.

Poker machines - come into the cost return accounting so much that very special thought must be given to maximum use - don't hide them or put them in almost inaccessible areas. Display 'em - they are valuable merchandise. You've got a license, you pay your taxes, and you are entitled to use them to the fullest - don't ask your members or guests to walk the length of your auditorium to put in a 20¢ piece - keep 'em clean, have pleasant staff looking after 'em - experience has shown you can't go past a nice female poker machine attendant.

The "rock" scene - clubs are going overboard to present the "rockies", and this could only be for "show purposes".

At the risk of being called a square, I frankly state that the percentage return on this type of entertainment is nil - the patrons it attracts would not contribute one "Centavo" to the clubs profitability. You might query the point and say everything has'nt got to be profitable, but remember every unprofitable section is a "bleed" on poker machines, and mark my words, the time is now rampant when a return should be made on everything.

Rock groups command up to \$5 entrance fee in halls that are only "barns", but the club movement want to bring them to members for free.

Clubs should charge members and guests to attend this type of entertainment, where at least it is heard in comfort. The under 21 member must contribute his or her share to the club, and not be a burden on the "oldies" - he or she have a vote.

Small clubs must open their "hearts" to locals - the prestigious Golf and Bowls Clubs must seek the membership of the surrounding population and not remain aloof.

What's nicer than a quiet drink or a quiet pull of the handle looking out onto a golf course or a bowling green, even if you are not an active "sport". The social members are humans as well, and certainly would not deny the sportsman or woman their privileges. They will certainly help pay the enormous green or fairway costs. "Don't knock 'em".

This is not a "down" article, but an attempt to show that the "salad days" are gone and that putting the shoulder to the wheel must be the motto, that means Directors and Committee Members too.

You only get out of the Club movement what you put into it.

George Wintle