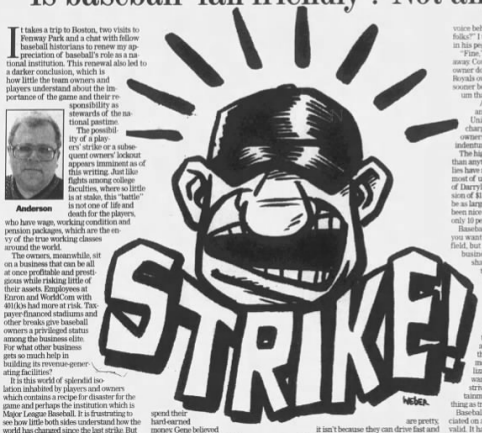
Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/522155899

Downloaded on Oct 22, 2022

DIALOGUE

MICHIANA POINT OF VIEW/DAVE ANDERSON

Is baseball 'fan friendly'? Not anymore



Anderson

It takes a trip to Boston, two visits to Fenway Park and a chat with fellow baseball historians to renew my appreciation of baseball's role as a national institution. This renewal also led to a darker conclusion, which is how little the team owners and players understand about the importance of the game and their responsibility as stewards of the national pastime.

The possibility of a players' strike or a subsequent owners' lockout appears imminent as of this writing. Just like fights among college faculties, where so little is at stake, this "battle" is not one of life and death for the players, who have wage, working condition and pension packages, which are the envy of the true working classes around the world.

The owners, meanwhile, sit on a business that can be all at once profitable and prestigious while risking little of their assets. Employees at Enron and WorldCom with 401(k)s had more at risk. Taxpayer-financed stadiums and other breaks give baseball owners a privileged status among the business elite. For what other business gets so much help in building its revenue-generating facilities?

It is this world of splendid isolation inhabited by players and owners which contains a recipe for disaster for the game and perhaps the institution which is Major League Baseball. It is frustrating to see how little both sides understand how the world has changed since the last strike. But greed and arrogance have cooperated before in the downfall of human institutions.

During my broadcast career I had the pleasure of interviewing Gene Corrigan when he was athletic director at the University of Notre Dame. Corrigan was one of those people who was always able to impart a bit of wisdom during every interview I still remember what he said about his top priorities as A.D. at Notre Dame. The guiding principle was that Notre Dame athletics were in competition for the entertainment dollar because people had other places to spend their hard-earned money. Gene believed his job was to make the product attractive. There is a great deal of wisdom in that simple idea, but it is a wisdom that has eluded baseball's players and owners alike.

The millionaire players and owners have lost touch with this entertainment concept as much as they have lost touch with the general public. The concept is called being "fan friendly."

Much to my chagrin, NASCAR has gotten it right. The drivers know why they make so much money. It is not because they are pretty. It isn't because they can drive fast and it isn't because the sport has intrinsic appeal. It's because NASCAR knows it is where it is because of the fans. If only Major League Baseball could grasp and embrace this simple concept. If not, then NASCAR may bloody well become the new national pastime.

Back in 1976, my future wife and I went to the real Comiskey Park to see the Chicago White Sox and Kansas City Royals. We were in the left field picnic gardens getting our lunch. As we were putting the final touches on the burgers, a voice behind us said, "Is everything OK, folks?" I turned and there was Bill Veeck in his peg legged splendor.

"Fine," I babbled. Mr. Veeck walked away. Could you imagine any present-day owner doing the same? The present-day Bowie owner, David Glass, would no sooner be caught dead in Kaufman Stadium than he would in Wal-Mart.

As for the players, their incomes and pensions are beyond reason. Union spokesman act like their charges are wage slaves, claiming the owners want to return to the days of indentured servitude.

The high salaries are an ego thing, more than anything else. Players and their families have more economic security than most of us will ever dream of. The widow of Darryl Kile is drawing an annual pension of $113,000. Hopefully, my 401(k) will be as large when I retire. Wouldn't it have been nice if Studebaker workers had been only 10 percent as well off?

Baseball is an unusual business in that you want to beat the opposition on the field, but do not want to put them out of business. The battle isn't over market share as much as it is over fan interest and subsequent high attendance.

It's the entertainment, stupid! If the players and owners somehow get this, baseball will be around for a long while. A strike or lockout will not go over well with a public that will remember the sacrifices of police, firemen and workers on Sept. 11, let alone the sacrifices of our brave servicemen who are fighting to save civilization from savages. In light of our war on terrorism, baseball should strive to maintain its status as entertainment, as it may not survive something as trivial as a work stoppage.

Baseball is an institution that is appreciated on a variety of levels, all equally valid. It has entertainment value. A day at the ballpark is a day without care. The great Chicago broadcaster Jack Brickhouse used to say, "Leave your cares behind and come out to the ballpark!" That is still a valid idea, if only the players and owners would get it.

Dave Anderson is chairman of the Umpire and Rules Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research and is author of "More than Merkle," a history of the 1908 baseball season. A former South Bend resident, he lives in Olathe, Kan., with his wife Judy and two Siberian huskies.

THE WRITER'S ART
JAMES J. KILPATRICK

Guide to use of 'woman,' 'female,' 'lady'

James J. Kilpatrick — Universal Press Syndicate

The Court of Peeves, Crotchets and Irks resumes its summer session with a petition from Larry Wilkerson of Atlanta. He asks for a declaratory judgment defining the use of "woman," "female" and "lady."

The court should know better than to get into this one, but the court is in its intrepid mode.

Let us consider ladies first. The question first was presented to the court in 1987, when the newspapers reported upon the indiscretions of Sen. Gary Hart of Colorado. When it appeared that an attractive young female had spent the night at the senator's townhouse, on the very night that reporters had staked out the house, a columnist commented gallantly that "the lady was in the wrong place at the wrong time." This provoked a plea for an injunction against the use of "lady" instead of "woman" in such a context.

The court denied the injunction. It reasoned that in this context, to say that "the woman" spent the night would have carried pejorative overtones, and no such overtones were justified. The senator's guest was not a call girl. She was just being friendly. The court will continue to defend the use of "lady" in a complimentary or euphemistic context, e.g., "ladylike" and "ladies room." The court has not been fully briefed on "lady wrestler" and expresses no opinion.

This brings us to the distinction between "woman" and "female." We begin by acknowledging that while all women are females, not all females are women.

This brings us to the distinction between "woman" and "female." We begin by acknowledging that while all women are females, not all females are women. The particular female under discussion could be a mare, a filly, a sow or a bitch. Or the female could be 4 years old. The terms are not fully fungible.

Wilkerson's petition was prompted by an outbreak of stories about athletic programs under Title IX of the Civil Rights Act. The law requires that federal aid at the college level must be channeled equally, more or less, to men's and women's sports. Are the participants male athletes and female athletes? Or are they men athletes and women athletes?

Five years ago, when this issue was last before the court, the evidence was in conflict. Nellie Bly came to fame as a "female newspaper reporter." The Postal Service commemorated "women artists." USA Today reported that a man had been sentenced to death for killing "a female soldier." The Associated Press reviewed the efforts of the League of Women Voters.

In its 1987 decree, the court held mystically that sensitive writers should use "woman" for all things womanly and "female" for all references having to do with animals and statistics.

The useful doctrine of *stare decisis* prompts the court to adhere to its own precedents. The clerk will prepare an order not inconsistent with this opinion.

Bob Savage, of Somewhere in Cyberspace, petitions the court for an injunction against "the reason is because." On its own motion, the court will add "the reason why." This is the evidence. The CEO of AOL Time Warner said last year, "The reason we are selling all of the Warner Bros stores is because we are not in the real estate business." From a sports page, "The reason the American soccer team did so well is because they worked as a team." From an editorial: "There is no reason why African-American and Hispanic students cannot compete head-to-head with Anglo students."

The court will deny an injunction but will issue an admonition. These constructions often are redundant and almost always are clumsy. "The reason we are selling all the stores is that we are not in the real estate business" is a better sentence than the CEO's sentence. Better still would be: "We are selling all the stores because we are not in the real estate business." But "why" significantly helps in, "There is no reason why African-American and Hispanics cannot compete ..."

In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary of English Usage, the editors devote four columns to a defense of "the reason is because" and another column in defense of "the reason why." They quote 30 passages from writers as far apart as Francis Bacon and William Butler Yeats. Against this impressive body of evidence the court's reservations cannot prevail. On that depressing note, we stand adjourned.

Readers are invited to send dated citations of usage to James Kilpatrick in care of this newspaper. His e-mail address is kilpatj@aol.com.

U.S. needs to tighten Russia's 'loose' nuclear weapons

By KARL F. INDERFURTH
Special to The Baltimore Sun

WASHINGTON — The United States must remain focused on what should be the primary goal of U.S.-Russia cooperation on the nuclear weapons front: preventing the acquisition of nuclear weapons or materials by terrorists — the most serious threat to U.S. and world security. This must be kept in mind as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee opens hearings on the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (Treaty of Moscow) signed by Presidents Bush and Vladimir Putin in May, an agreement that opens a new and encouraging chapter in U.S.-Russia relations.

There are steps the Senate could take while carrying out its constitutional role in the treaty ratification process to reduce the likelihood that "loose" nuclear weapons will fall into the hands of terrorists or terrorist states.

By taking these steps, the Senate can help the Bush administration "liquidate the legacy of the Cold War," as President Bush proclaimed shortly before signing the treaty. The Senate would also be more fully carrying out our obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — obligations that the Moscow treaty recognizes but fails to advance to the necessary degree.

First, the Senate should call for full treaty compliance on an accelerated timetable.

The treaty requires both sides to cut by two-thirds their number of operationally deployed long-range nuclear weapons by Dec. 31, 2012, from more than 6,000 today to between 1,700 and 2,200. Why more than 10 years? Moving sooner would be militarily prudent and would demonstrate that the United States is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the NPT as quickly as possible, thus enhancing overall compliance.

Second, while moving in the right direction, the Moscow treaty does not do enough to address related issues of threat reduction and tactical nuclear weapons.

As Russia begins the process of removing thousands of warheads from its missiles in accordance with the treaty, paradoxically, the dilemma of loose nuclear warheads could be exacerbated.

The challenge of safely storing nuclear weapons and materials — at present, Russia has about 20,000 assembled nuclear weapons and enough material to construct at least 40,000 more — will grow more difficult as those Russian nuclear weapons are taken off line, with some warheads being stored and some dismantled.

It is important that the United States and Russia consider how to accelerate efforts to account for, secure and eliminate excess nuclear weapons and materials. Currently, after 10 years of U.S.-Russia cooperation, only about 40 percent of Russian nuclear material storage sites have been upgraded to standards that Washington recognizes as acceptable. The Senate should therefore consider attaching a condition to the treaty mandating enhanced levels of threat reduction cooperation between the two countries in order to ensure that weapons and materials are managed as staged reductions occur.

Finally, the question of tactical nuclear weapons was not addressed in the treaty. The United States is uncertain about how many tactical nuclear weapons Russia possesses, though the number is clearly in the thousands.

These weapons are tempting targets for terrorists because they combine portability with a high destructiveness capability (a 12.5 kiloton nuclear weapon could kill up to 250,000 people if detonated in a dense urban area and render the area uninhabitable for decades). As part of its deliberations on the treaty, the Senate should consider pressing the administration to address the tactical nuclear weapon issue through other agreements and programs with Russia.

Unlike previous arms control pacts that generated strong debate and fierce opposition, this agreement has attracted widespread bipartisan support. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is therefore in an excellent position to make a good treaty better and provide greater security for us all.

Karl F. Inderfurth, a senior adviser to the Nuclear Threat Reduction Campaign and professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, was deputy staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the SALT II debate.

Investors these days demand more than faith

By LARRY EICHEL
Knight Ridder Newspapers

So the president of the United States journeyed to Wall Street on Tuesday to inform corporate leaders that lying, cheating and deceiving are unacceptable.

I don't mean to belittle George W. Bush's speech, although some of the lines, like the one proclaiming that in the long run there is "no wealth without character," seemed inscrutable or just plain wrong.

And I did like his demand for tougher sentences for executives who commit fraud, his call for boards of directors to be independent of management and his creation of a corporate task force within the Justice Department.

Still, I found it disheartening that such a lecture had become necessary — for reasons economic, moral, and, of course, political.

Bush's own political neck is not immediately at risk, although, at times, he seems inclined to make it so. The prickly defensiveness he's shown in deflecting (as opposed to answering) questions surrounding his own corporate history has not served him well.

In 1990, he sold 212,000 shares of Harken Energy Corp., a Texas-based firm on whose board he served. He made the deal eight days before the company announced large losses and the stock price fell. Then, he was eight months late in disclosing the sale, although he had properly filed a form announcing his intent to sell.

His protective mantra has been that the Securities and Exchange Commission looked into that sale — and into his approval, as a member of Harken's audit committee, of a questionable accounting decision that involved millions of dollars — and took no disciplinary action in either case. He says that the public has known for years all about this "political stuff" and that we've had all the facts at our disposal. Which somewhat overstates the situation.

Be that as it may, the more timely political question is what impact the corporate scandals will have on the approaching congressional elections. For months, Democrats have been looking for an effective way to go after a party led by a popular wartime president. This may be it, even if, as the White House has noted, some of the excesses now coming to light have origins in the Clinton era.

The Republicans have long been seen as the party of big business, an identification that's useful when it comes to raising money but can be counterproductive at times like these. The image is as strong as ever, now that the GOP (and the nation) are being led by two former corporate executives, Bush and Vice President Cheney.

So what are the voters making of all this? A poll done for National Public Radio by Democrat Stan Greenberg and Republican Bill McInturff finds that the reports of corporate fraud have left a deep impact. Voters are extremely unhappy about the accounting irregularities, about seeing executives get rich while employees, retirees and small investors suffer. According to the poll, the anger about misbehavior in corporate America is deeper than about abusive priests in the Catholic Church.

Whether such feeling converts into votes for Democratic candidates is another matter.

The poll, completed last week, tested several partisan messages to see which might resonate; it offered no clear answers. A Republican script stressing Bush's efforts to respond to abuse in the boardrooms scored just as well as a Democratic one that cast the Republicans as the handmaidens of big business and the Democrats as protectors of the country as a whole.

In the end, I suspect, the politics of this matter will be pretty simple, at least compared to the debate over how tough the new regulations should be. More often than not, elections turn on the electorate's view of the health of the economy and in a 401(k) nation, with more Americans than ever invested in stocks and mutual funds, the markets have become central to our sense of well-being.

Unless investor confidence and the markets rebound, the Republicans are likely to pay a price in November. That's what happens to the party in power.

Larry Eichel is a columnist and editorial-board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer. Readers may write to him at: Philadelphia Inquirer, P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101, or by e-mail at leichel@phillynews.com.

Copyright © 2022 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

POWERED BY Newspapers.com