The Devil Advocates

DR. SETH L. HAWKINS IS MADDER THAN HELL!

GET READY: Below: 2,011
STATE LEGISLATORS HAVE JUST WON A SCHOLARSHIP TO HADDAS.

SPORTS ECONOMICS - ETHICS + RESPONSIBILITY - F

November 1, 1997

MERICAN DOLLY: The Day of the Dead (Now and)

You all failed. You should be ashamed of yourselves. Major League
Baseball is gone from the Twin Cities, and I have no evidence that
a single member of this SABR chapter did one useful thing to prevent
this calamity. In fact, some of you, and you know who you are, go
ready for eternal damnation, says a sympathetic representative of
the teams who were rejected for the new stadium. You should
kill yourselves, but have the decency to resign from the chapter
first. I failed too; the team is leaving and it is not being sold
to the folks in Montgomery, Wash. I'll get them the Astros.

Here, in no particular order, are ten issues that the ignominious
legislators and citizens of Minnesota failed to comprehend:

1. It is unfair restraint of trade to require a MLB owner to build
his own stadium. If he does, he no longer has complete freedom
to sell the team, for in selling it to a new owner who will move the
team, the stadium property becomes essentially worthless. But if a
government entity builds and owns the stadium (as has been the case
in MLB since Dodger Stadium was built), the stadium still has value,
as the government will be impelled to go out and get another team.

2. Government spending is not a cafeteria in which the voters get
to choose what they want. If you don't like MLB, shut up (not because
your values and thinking are wrong [I agree], but) your tax dollar
pays for all sorts of useless things, like the deep foot
Boundary Waters Canoe Area, various stage and opera companies, car
and race centers, social workers and other miscellaneous
fascinations. The trade-off is that I endure all these wastes of
money, and liberal do-gooders put up with the ballpark.

3. We shouldn't reward a bad owner by giving him a new stadium.'

Sigh. Yes, he's a snide idiot, but . . . a. we'll be rid of him
soon anyway, because he'll be doozy; b. he's not inheriting; he
can be put out of the point is to have MLB, no matter whether
the owner; c. neither Polihol nor a new owner would own the ballpark
anyway, so we're not giving anything anyway.

4. We shouldn't reward millionaire owners and athletes.' First of
all, no one but a millionaire has the available capital to take the
risk of buying a MLB club, so there aren't any other kind of owners,
and you wouldn't want someone who wasn't economically successful
owning a club anyway. And only a few of the players are
'millionaires'; those who are, are for a very short time in the
working life of an adult human being, yet to hear the blue-collar best,
you'd think that all the ballplayers had inherited wealth. Yes, it
is stunning that a rookie makes over $1000 a year, but they are, by
definition, the 700 best in their field. The 700th highest-paid
physician, CEO, real estate agent, physicist, I will NOT call them what
they insist, and I sure won't accept their demand to capitalize the "r",
singer, college president [fill in titles of many other professions]
is making a lot more than the rookie ballplayer. So you try to hit
a round ball going 90-to-100 mph with a cylindrical piece of wood, or keep
the best in the business from doing so: it's a skill worth the bucks.
And a ballplayer, at the MLB level, is doing a lot more for history
and culture than Wayne Newton, Ted Kennedy, or any rich prolitocrat.
(at least the ballplayers only spit and scratch.) And folks, no
matter how many MLB players net, pay how much, the best locates
(and thus most "expensive") seat at a MLB game is LESS that the
cheapest noresellable upper-deck obstructed-view perch at one of the
other three sports. In other words, no one forces people to waste money on
beer and bad food. So one has to right be carpets to take the
bus. The same nitwits who whine about walking two blocks from a
parking lot to a ballpark will, sheep-like, walk a mile in a
shopping mall lot.

And of course, by failing to "reward millionaire owners and
athletes," you are actually punishing every kid and adult who just
might like to see a MLB game. Including the Blue Jays fans from
Ontario and Saskatchewan, you who are additionally preventing
from bringing $61.4 million (US) into the Minnesota economy.
Smart.

5. A bad team doesn't deserve a new stadium. Lock, you fools, by
the time the part is built, it might not be a bad team anymore.
Baseball teams' fortunes rise and fall precipitously in five-year
spans. Sometimes a new park generates capital to build a better
team, as in Cleveland. It's not like sixty years ago, when the
Yankees were always good, and the Browns always bad. Besides, only
half the teams can be winning at any one time. Think: be
objective and enjoy the visiting teams.

6. Journalists publicized, and legislators fell for, obviously
financial studies done by charlatans who began with their "mind's
made up, and then shrewed the "research" to fit the niches made
by the axe they had to grind. The ones who propagated the lie that
MLB teams, and new stadiums, do not have a significant economic
impact. You will note that none of these studies were done by Nobel
Prize winners or other well-known economists. They were all
hack professors from minor-league pseudoverities, who are
jealous of the "real" sports and will sign more than they do.
Although there are some, you don't need a major economic study
to see the economic gains. The revitalization that a new MLB
park brings: just walk around Denver, Cleveland, Baltimore,
St. Louis, and elsewhere, often parts of town you'd normally
have been prudent to tour in an armored personnel carrier.

7. One of the few sound principles of urban planning is that you
correct the mistakes of the past. And replacing the Metrodome
would sure exemplify that promise. No matter how badly the Twins
performed, and they shouldn't have to endure the legacy of the most
important period in architectural history. Visiting teams have justifiably
grievously griped for years. True baseball fans should not have to
endure such a horrid facility. You imagine the prices were
staggering in a quantum hit, and if the whole superficially
SPCO had to use a big, ugly tent with bad acoustics, you could
bet there would be a major scandal, and public money would be
available faster than the shortest measurable unit of time
(usually a traffic light giving green in Manhattan and the cab
driver behind you blowing his horn). And don't tell me about
"wonderful old Metrodome Stadium." It was a tricked-out minor
league dump that would by now be condemned (and not just verbally).

8. This is a republic, not a democracy. Read the Constitution,
and the Pledge of Allegiance [a democracy is a system in which three
wolves and a sheep vote on what to have for dinner]. Thus,
elected officials are entrusted with preventing the will of the
inevitable masses from reducing reality to, instead doing what
is best for them. Since the voters are too lane-brained to understand
the economic and cultural advantages of using their tax
dollars to build a stadium, legislators are supposed to pass
laws mandating such spending.

9. Lots of businesses get subsidies in the form of "infrastructure."
Airlines pay rent, but are not required to build their own airports.
Maybe we should give the fake cemetry a huge list of private companies that are routinely
subsidized, for the sake of "local economic development."

10. You've seen all those studies about the most desirable
cities in which to live (they overemphasize the damndest things,
like health care and theatres). Well, there are plenty of folks
whose decision to relocate is influenced by easy access to major
league sports. If a large market like the Twin Cities has a
major league baseball team and lets it go, it is guilty of fraud
in enticing folks like your humble columnist to live here for
that reason, and then letting the team leave. Surely I can find an
attorney who wishes to continue the lawsuit, and although I
really isn't, for it is with this argument that Seattle got its
team's present team. Well, precedent's already established! Hello, Niles Lord! Do I have a
harm for you to litigate!"