

# EDITORIAL COMMENT

FROM the field where his influence strove continually for the betterment of the great game he so ably typified, Pres. Tener has passed forever to other scenes and other pursuits. In normal times his going would have been a rare headliner, a theme to exhaust the best efforts of feature writers for many days. Now in the gloom of the great conflict which has engulfed the world, his resignation tendered and accepted, creates only a casual ripple on the surface of the day's events, his passing leaves scarce an echo in the columns of that press where he once occupied so conspicuous a place.

President Tener was the ablest chief executive, the National League has ever had. He alone had that commanding presence, that force of character that dominating personality which could compel the respect of his factious owners, which could lend a dignity to his position sadly lacking in former years. Now that he has gone, dark days face the National League, days when the strong hand of a forceful leader is imperatively needed to guide the shattered fabric of that league through the perilous shoals of financial disaster.

To the credit of the owners be it said, Pres. Tener's resignation was entirely voluntary. Nor was it in any sense an impetuous act upon his part. He has been drifting away from his position for some time. Always a business man with large interests which demanded a considerable portion of his attention, he found himself some time ago with more work upon his hands than he could satisfactorily handle. Last winter he tendered his resignation but consented under pressure, to serve on a part time basis. The arrangement though necessary, was unfortunate both for Pres. Tener and for the league. For the season of unexampled perplexity which ensued, demanded much more of time and effort from the overworked executive than he was able to give.

Nevertheless, all lovers of the great sport who knew him, recognize in Pres. Tener's resignation, a distinct loss to the game.

IF the National League owners seek a president who commands the respect of press and public, who thoroughly understands his job in every detail, they have to seek no further than their own office. John Heydler is that man. Pres. Tener brought to his mission certain unique qualifications which Mr. Heydler would be the last to challenge or attempt to rival. He brought a great name, the prestige of brilliant achievements in other conspicuous fields. He came as an ex-congressman, as the governor of a great state. John Heydler has played a humbler role, but he has played it well. He knows his complicated job in every detail and he fully measures up to that job. Once before he served as president of the National League in the interim between the unfortunate death of the former incumbent and the selection of his successor:

In every respect Mr. Heydler is qualified for the position. Furthermore, his natural abilities have been amplified by a wealth of exact experience in the league office which no other man in the whole United States could match. He is known everywhere in the realm of sport, and favorably known. He has hosts of friends and no enemies. Further-

more, he is at present acting president. Why should the National League seek further than Secretary Heydler for an executive who can serve them faithfully and well?

WHEN Secretary Baker announced that the work or fight law would apply to the ball players on September 1, he laid down a broad and general rule. But the baseball situation was somewhat more complex than the Secretary appeared to assume. And his ruling made no provision whatever, for the World's series.

That ruling allowed the club owners and the players to continue in their customary profession until September 1. No one disputes this fact. But if the club owners acted upon that permission, and they have so acted, the World's Series would inevitably come after September 1. Now, it is argued that, the season might have been called off August 20, thus allowing ample time for the series before the fatal date. But had the season thus been prematurely closed, fourteen club owners out of sixteen would have found their business interests terminated ten days prior to the taking effect of the Baker decree. In other words, in order to play the world's series before September 1, seven-eighths of the owners and seven-eighths of the players would have been compelled to shut up shop ten days before the order in itself would have brought about such a result.

From this evident injustice the owners decided that the only escape was to complete the season to the date prescribed by Secretary Baker, and to trust to the good sense and equitable dealing of the War Department for a proper ruling on the World's Series.

THE close of the 1918 season will go down in baseball history as the time of the Great Uncertainty. At an hour when the public was wont to compare the chances of the pennant winning clubs that public is now given over to speculating on the probability or improbability of any series at all.

This uncertainty is extremely unfortunate for it reacts upon the game and exerts a depressing influence upon the players at a time when they should be straining every nerve to win.

For our readers this uncertainty will have become a reality. The situation will have clarified, the big series be an accomplished fact or a regrettable memory. But while the task of prediction wholly in the dark, is a most unenviable one, we are forced to assume that task and to resort to conjecture in an effort to decipher a problem which, for our readers, will be solved, in due course, by current events.

Will there be a big series? We would like to remodel that query slightly. We would prefer to ask the question, Should there be a World's Series? And to that question we would give, without a moment's hesitation, an unqualified assent.

Some time ago the War Department issued its now famous work or fight injunction. The rule was to apply on July 1. But those men affected continued to work at their employments until July 1. Then they sought other employments and were given a reasonable time in which to find jobs. In individual cases, where too great hardship would result, the rule was not applied at all.

Secretary Baker decided that baseball players were affected by this work or fight rule, but he later suspended the operation of that rule until September 1. In other words, he allowed the players to continue at their profession until September 1, or rather through Labor Day, since the first of September is a Sunday and the second a legal holiday.

In prompt compliance with this order the owners announced that the regular season would close upon September 2. In so doing they performed their full duty without argument or question. In so doing they freed themselves from all blame, no matter how much some misguided newspaper men may desire to fasten blame upon them. Upon the second day of September Major League baseball comes to a close, the players of fourteen ball clubs enter upon or seek other employment. The members of two ball clubs, unless forbidden to do so, will stage the customary World's Series, the greatest single event in the whole world of sport.

**A**SSUME for the sake of argument that there may be no World's Series. What good would be accomplished? The labor of some forty players apparently would be secured for some supposedly more useful occupation than baseball. But some of the players are going into the army and have already received permission from their draft boards to report not earlier than September 15. They are not affected. Others are beyond the draft age. They are not affected. Others would return to their farms. There they would do little or nothing more than would be accomplished in their absence. They would not be affected. In actual fact, however, they might seem to be so. Others would secure jobs, but many of them would not get immediately to work. The ruling was to be applied with discretion. A man is entitled to some vacation. Reasonable time is allowed for the securing of employment. Many of the players involved would not get immediately to work after September 1, whether there was a World's series or not. The number of men actually involved in the ruling is a dwindling group of athletes whose maximum is forty and whose minimum is certainly not over half that number.

Let us strike an average and say that perhaps thirty men would get to work a few days earlier than would otherwise be the case, provided the World's Series were abolished. That is the sole good which would result. Is it worth while?

To answer that question satisfactorily, let us look at the other side. Let us see what would be gained by permitting the series as per schedule. In the first place the government itself would profit very substantially. In the most recent series, that of last season, the receipts totalled \$425,878. The government levies a tax of ten per cent. on all paid admissions. The government tax, had it been in force last year, would have realized from the World's Series the substantial sum of \$42,587.80. That is clear profit to the government. It is a sum many times greater than the combined earnings of all the players involved were they employed during the duration of the series at some other occupation.

**T**HE owners have been hard hit by the Baker order. They consider that they are in an occupation at least as essential as that of the actors or moving picture people, professions which were exempted. Nevertheless, they are making no complaint, but are closing their business on September 1, at immense pecuniary loss. Their compliance with what they deem a rankly discriminatory

order is eminently patriotic and deserves praise instead of the insane abuse which a number of empty headed sport writers have seen fit to vent upon them. The World's Series would allow these owners to recoup some part of their immense losses for the season.

The players have suffered greatly through the work or fight rule. Few, if any of them, will be able to earn as much money in other pursuits as they could earn at baseball. The World's Series would give the players a chance at least partially to reimburse themselves for the inevitable losses resulting from the greatly reduced season. Furthermore, not only the winning players, but the players in the four first division clubs of both leagues are affected. For the players of the first division clubs share in the receipts of the series.

The players in both leagues have had this reward in view since the beginning of the season. They have worked for the opportunity to participate in the series. If the series is not held the players lose a considerable part of the financial remuneration to which they consider themselves equitably entitled.

Under the new system of distributing the receipts the players on the championship club receive perhaps \$2,500 per man. The players on the losing club perhaps \$1,800. Does any draft board mean to assume that a man who can be thus rewarded for ten days' work does not suffer a real hardship if ordered to report for work at an occupation which might pay him twenty-five dollars for the same amount of time? For what is at stake? Not the wholesale exemption of a large body of men for a long time, merely the exemption of twenty to thirty men for perhaps ten days. Is it worth while to abolish an institution which has grown dear to the American public for such an absurdly small result? The government rightly urges us to save. Can the government itself be guilty of the waste of such a colossal fortune for so meagre a gain? Frankly we do not wish to believe so nor will we believe so, unless compelled to by the inexorable fact.

**"B**ASEBALL is dead," is the piteous wail from a number of sport writers who are a disgrace to their profession. If baseball is dead these writers have no one to blame but themselves. They have done their absolute utmost to bring about the condition they affect to deplore. For our part, however, we no more believe their statement than we approve of their motives.

Baseball, that is to say professional baseball, has been hit by the war and hard hit. But so have most other industries. Do you hear the Automobile men or the Jewellers or the makers of musical instruments wailing from the housetops that their business is dead? Would you expect anyone even in a home for the feeble minded, to knock his own business?

The most serious thing baseball has to answer for is some of the men who have been connected with it. How a baseball writer who has made his living from baseball just as directly as the players or the owners, can indulge in knocking the very industry which has brought him all the notoriety he possesses, is a study for the alienist. The problem is too deep for us.

In all ages certain men have taken a seeming delight in sheer wanton destruction. Not often, however, have they torn down the very edifice in which they live. But this act of insensate folly is precisely the act of well-known sport writers of the present day.

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We cannot follow their line of thought for we know little of crooked minds. But we assume some of their malevolent activities have been the result of personal malice against certain owners, while perhaps more is due to a jaundiced vision from which the whole fraternity of baseball writers has suffered to a greater or less degree. And by this we mean that wholesale proclivity for picking flaws and finding fault rather than offering broadly constructive criticism.

Read the account of the game in an average sport sheet. Half the space is filled with a roasting of the home team, if they lost. Scant mention is made of stellar plays, usually none at all of plays that were merely ordinarily good. And yet at a big league contest ten plays are properly, even brilliantly executed where one is bungled. Would anyone ever dream that such was the case from reading the sport sheets?

**C**ERTAIN writers have explained their seeming hostility to the game they represent or rather misrepresent, by saying "I must state the facts." If such people would do what they profess to do no criticism could possibly be attached to their line of conduct. But they do not do this. In short, no one more persistently, methodically, and completely misrepresent the facts than these same writers.

For what are the facts? Baseball has been deemed a necessity for our soldiers and sailors abroad and in cantonment at home, perhaps four million persons. For the amusement of these four million, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent for baseball equipment. Very good. An admirable campaign. But what about the ninety six million at home? If baseball is good for the men in the camp or field, is it not equally good for the man at home?

Why not enlarge on that fact for a while, instead of searching with a magnifying glass, for minute imperfections to rave about.

No other industry, bar none, in proportion to its size, has contributed more substantially for war charities and general government service, than baseball. Why not enlarge on that broad fact for a while?

In Germany the theatres were closed at the beginning of the war. Later the government commanded them to reopen. The German Government realized that some form of relaxation was imperatively needed by the civilian population. Not having baseball they did the next best thing. Why not enlarge on that fact for a while?

In England, government and public alike frowned upon athletic sport at the beginning of the war. Later the government realized that sport was a most essential thing and did all in its power to revive it. Why not enlarge on that fact for a while?

President Wilson threw his immense influence against the curtailment of athletic sport in the colleges. The administration, at no time, has been adverse to professional baseball. Even in Secretary Baker's statement there was an undercurrent of regret for the damage he was doing the sport. But he did not mean to destroy it utterly. Why not enlarge on that fact for a while?

In short, if baseball like most other big industries, has been hard hit by the war, is it not the part of wisdom, prudence, not to say good horse sense for a body of men who are supposed to be promoting the interests of the game, to boost a little rather than knock? Why not enlarge on that fact a bit?

We do not disagree with our dyspeptic brothers in their statement. In fact, in that statement we fully concur. By all means give us the facts.