

Hoch, Paul. *Rip Off the Big Game*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1972).

Rip Off the Big Game by Paul Hoch, is a fascinating, controversial, sometime scholarly cross between a serious work and a gossip column which will appeal to radicals and appall conservatives. To students of sport it will be seen either as a revolutionary tract which attempts to do new things or as an unscholarly, biased, and vicious attack upon American society and sport. It is improbable, because of its approach, that it will be accepted by serious sport historians. A more searching review of this interesting book reveals that, in fact, sport historians can derive new insights and innovative approaches to the study of sport in society. However, this vitriolic condemnation of big time sport can be accepted only if one agrees to certain basic assumptions about different aspects of the work. There are three different levels of the book which can be judged separately and it is unlikely that any single scholar will or can accept the assumptions underlying all of these parts. Briefly, these are concerned with the focus of the book from a disciplinary viewpoint; the use of a Marxist model for the analysis of American society; and the

basic canons of scholarship which underlie the writing of any study which purports to have some claims to scholarship. An analysis of these three areas will give a clear indication of the values of this book and the people to whom it will appeal.

The first basic assumption underlying the whole work is that the traditional fragmentation of the study of society into a variety of subdisciplines is, in fact, artificial and lacking in meaning.

The very act of parceling the analysis of society, or the role of sports in society, out among the various disciplinarians--political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, historians, philosophers, ad infinitum--virtually entails that no total critique of the society, or its sports, can possibly emerge. (p. 13)

Obviously, many historians will find this unacceptable but it should be recognized that this is Hoch's focus and he did not attempt to write either sociology, history or within the boundaries of any other traditional discipline. This writer is in total agreement with using an interdisciplinary approach to study society. This is not a denial of the validity of history or sociology, although Hoch in many ways denies their usefulness, but rather the acceptance of a different form of studying sport in society. It would appear that in the modern day with cries for relevancy still ringing in our ears, there is a need for sport historians to embrace the disciplinary insights of other subdisciplines concerned with the analysis of sport. Therefore, in examining Hoch's book, one must be fully aware of the interdisciplinary nature of this study and not criticize it on the grounds that it is not history or sociology--one can reject it because it isn't--but *Rip Off the Big Game* cannot be evaluated purely as history, sociology, or any other subdiscipline. There is little doubt that Hoch, through his use of history, sociology, social psychology, political science and psychology, fulfills his objective of writing an interdisciplinary book. This is obviously an extremely difficult task since few people have attempted to develop coherent analyses along such lines.

The second basic assumption which underlies Hoch's book is without a doubt unlikely to be accepted in North America. The analysis of society in classical Marxian terms has never, to my knowledge, been attempted in the realm of sport. The concept of a class society based upon the proximity to the means of production is alien to the very concept of democracy and the North American way of life. Both in the United States and Canada it is difficult to find meaningful sociological and historical analyses of society on the lines of social class or social stratification. There appears to be an uncritical acceptance of the belief in the equality of opportunity for all in both Canada and the United States despite the fact that the evidence supports alternative views of North American society. Hoch makes no bones about being a Marxist and the book being a Marxist analysis; therefore, the strength of this book in some ways lies in its Marxist approach. However, as with many disciples or prophets,

there is a tendency to overstate the case and the bias, which is recognized by Hoch, remains throughout the book and leaves one uncertain as to the quality of the production. The structure of the contents leaves little doubt that this is the, gospel according to "St. Marx". Hoch starts with an analysis of the relationship between sport and society and shows how, in his opinion, it is entirely related to the political economy of the country. He then analyzes the growth of big time sports in terms of monopoly capitalism and the ownership of sport by a small elite. The author proceeds to analyze how the capitalists use sport to achieve their own bourgeoisie ends. Sport is used by the elite to inculcate militaristic values and attitudes and thus promote imperialistic expansion. Hoch devotes two chapters to the use of sport to socialize for production and consumption; in other words, to make the working class produce more and consume more. Finally, sport is seen as being used to promote sexual and racial inequality. He culminates, as a good Marxist should, with a call for the cultural revolution which will revolutionize society and thus sport in North America. It is obvious that Hoch is trying to sell a particular world view. Unfortunately, because of some of the criticisms to be mentioned in the next section, he fails to achieve this end and leaves one with certain underlying doubts.

The area in which this book can be most logically criticized is in that of scholarship. One is dubious about accepting some of the findings and conclusions of this book because of the obviously biased scholarship. Perhaps a few examples will suffice. It would appear from the text that Hoch uses footnotes only when it suits him for there are numerous occasions throughout the book when quotes are made and no footnotes given to attest to the derivation of these quotations, (p. 76, 93, 94, 106, etc.). It is also rather noticeable that some of these are at critical junctures and it would appear that even in a work that is attempting to present a biased analysis, that there should be some consistency in terms of footnoting. The result, of course, is unsubstantiated assertions which leave the reader with more questions than answers and the existence of this throughout the whole text seriously detracts from the impact of Hoch's arguments. This really is a great pity because this writer, in particular, is impressed with the arguments and feels that there is a great deal of justification in what Hoch says, but unfortunately because of his admittedly value laden scholarship, he fails to provide any scientific justification which would lead people to accept his viewpoint and therefore the only ones likely to accept this book are those who accept the basic premises of Marxism. Perhaps more important, is the fact that he is careful in his selection of sources and makes use only of those that support his cause and only uses concrete evidence when it gives support to his hypotheses. One is wary of his attitude to scholarship since as he states, he is unimpressed with the scholarship of university academics which "leads to results not very different from gossip columns," (p. 15). In fact, this is exactly the criticism which could be leveled at him--it is little more than a gossip column. One is disturbed to find that even though he condemns "academics" such as Gerald

Kenyon and John Loy, he makes use of much of the material that has been gained from these so called "stilted irrelevancies", (p. 15). One feels that whether one approaches research from a value laden or a value free approach, there are certain basic tenets of scholarship that are appropriate to all. It would appear to me that one must examine the evidence in an unbiased manner and attempt to establish its validity or reliability. One of the weaknesses with such a biased approach as a Marxist analysis of sport is that a converted disciple is sometimes unwilling to accept the tenets of scholarship because the ends justify the means. World revolution is the ultimate concern and the means of achieving this are only determined by that end. Therefore, in terms of scholarship it would appear that this book is sadly lacking because of the unwillingness to establish basic criteria and to follow recognized canons of scholarship.

However, there is little doubt that this highly original and fascinating analysis of North American sport by Paul Hoch is worthwhile and in many ways a must for sport historians. He develops certain arguments and theories that deserve attention from sport historians. His focus upon the antecedents requires refutation by North American sport historians; if they are not refuted the condemnation of sport in North American society is complete. I would agree, therefore, with Hoch's final conclusion, "In the last analysis, in the sports world, as in the world as a whole, it will be socialism or fascism, global human liberation or barbarism," (p. 212). Hoch deserves attention; he asks questions and provides his answers. It is the duty of sport scientists to analyze these concepts and winnow the wheat from the chaff and either refute or accept his conclusions. The importance of this task cannot be over-estimated because, as he claims, it is either the end of sport or the beginning.

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