

LABORING AT THE BALL PARK

JAMES RICHARD HILL

Robert C. Berry, William B. Gould, IV, and Paul D. Staudohar. *Labor Relations in Professional Sports*. (Dover, MA: Auburn House, 1986). xii + 289 pp. Tables, notes, index. \$35.00.

This book represents a long overdue examination of labor relations in professional sports. While all industries have peculiarities that make their industrial relations somewhat different, professional sports may possess the most distinct system of all. The authors explore the historical development of the sports leagues and the corresponding player associations.

The text is comprised of nine chapters. The first two chapters present introductory and background material. Chapters three, four, six, and seven are devoted to labor relations in professional baseball, football, basketball, and hockey, respectively. Chapter five focuses on the football strike in 1982. "Unresolved Issues Facing Sports Unions" is the title of chapter eight; the book concludes with a look at the future of the professional sports industry.

This work offers abundant discussion of legal cases and arbitration rulings affecting the sports business. The authors also examine the economic and financial aspects of the industry that shape the collective bargaining process. Unfortunately, the book is disjointed and muddled in parts, particularly in the early chapters. For example, the authors fail to point out the most important feature of a sports league in the section entitled "Uniqueness of the Sports Industries." This subject is shunted to a later section in the chapter where the authors finally note that

unlike other industries where it is possible for one sector to seek its own market, the sports franchise cannot simply walk away from the league. Essential to its existence is having someone to compete with on the playing field. Without a rival league or the possibility of the formation of one, a professional sports team must stay with the league in order to survive (p. 7).

Moreover, the authors need to define and explain their terminology, such as the reserve clause and *stare decisis*. Some discussion of the significance and ramifications of baseball's exemption from antitrust legislation is also in order. Despite these misgivings, however, this volume is a welcome addition to any reading list on labor relations in professional sports.

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