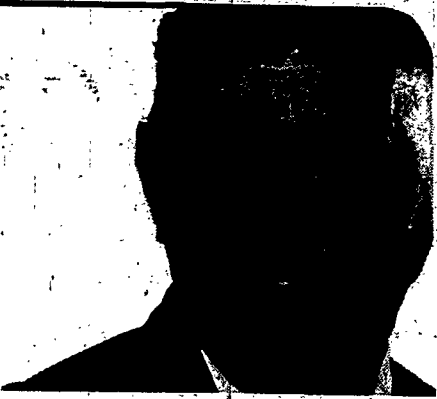


BOB CONSIDINE

On the Line



Specs Toporcer, a fine ball-player and gentleman athlete of a generation and more ago, patiently takes me to task for a recent piece I did about Curt Flood's Supreme Court suit against Baseball's Reserve Clause. The clause, I wrote, is unconstitutional because it supports a business monopoly engaged in interstate commerce and restricts the right of its employes to seek better jobs within the profession.

"I have no axe to grind," Specs writes. "I've been away from baseball, at least as an active member, for a score of years as a result of losing my sight at the end of 1951. (Shades of Bobby Thomson's homer, which I listened to via radio from my hospital bed.) Aside from my deep love for the game and my keen desire to see it flourish indefinitely as America's national game, there is no reason why I should take up the cudgel for the owners or anyone else.

"You implied that the owners were a greedy lot, being interested only in what they could get out of it," continues the 72-year-old vet who was the first big leaguer to wear glasses on the field. "For the most part, this is just not so. Of course they want to make it a going thing, but you should know that most of them come into the game because they like the game. I know that some of them would rather break even and win a pennant than make money and finish down in the race. It is still a sport to a good many of them.

"Having said that, I don't want you to believe my opinions are warped because of being envious of the way players are treated today. Not at all. Surely, there are millions of boys around the nation who now would be glad to be a part of the modern baseball peonage. Very, very few of today's players are underpaid, and players in general are treated with great consideration. On the contrary, many are overpaid as a result of having a good previous season.

"Donn Clendenon is a case in point. He was traded three times during the 1969 season, then was fortunate enough to

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get some timely homers for the Mets near the end of the season, and in the World Series against the Orioles. The following season he was paid \$90,000, perhaps twice as much as his skills called for. He stayed at that level in 1971 though he played only against lefthand pitching most of the time and didn't fare too well regardless of that fact."

(Ed. Note: Toporcer was paid about one tenth of that amount in 1926 when his 409 pinch-hitting lifted the St. Louis Cardinals into the World Series, wherein they beat the mighty Yankees.)

"Was Curt Flood a peon at \$90,000, playing for the Cardinals? The Phillies wanted to pay him more than that, and the Senators actually signed him for \$100,000 — at which point he walked away. Is he a martyr? I prefer to believe he has a screw loose somewhere. And how about stars who suffer serious injuries, such as Lonborg, who was asked not to ski but did ski and wrecked his career in an accident? Yet he was paid \$100,000, while out of action, because of his great previous season.

"You, like many others, believe that game can prosper if the reserve clause is removed from players contracts. Yes, it might survive but there isn't the slightest doubt in my mind that if it is removed or even modified to any marked extent, it would be a body blow for baseball. It would never again be the game all of us know."

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Nixon Trip to China 'Sensible,' Declares Bishop Walsh

Los Angeles — (RNS) — Bishop James E. Walsh, who was released from a Communist Chinese prison last year, said here that establishing diplomatic relations with Red China may eventually be of "some help to the Church."

"In principle, there should be communication between nations," he said when interviewed by The Tidings, news-weekly of the Los Angeles Catholic archdiocese.

Asked if his comments could be construed as support for President Nixon's move to establish U.S. relations with China, Bishop Walsh replied, "Of course, it's the only sensible thing to do."

He said "the Chinese have a natural genius for friendship and sociability. Establishing communications with them may help bring about a modification of the Chinese government's policies and perhaps eventually even be of some help to the Church.

"If the Chinese people ever get the opportunity to assert themselves and were able to free themselves from the slavery of communism, they would welcome the missionaries back with open arms," Bishop Walsh told The Tidings.

The 80-year-old Maryknoll priest was in Los Angeles to be a con-celebrant at a Mass on the silver jubilee of the episcopal consecration of Archbishop Timothy Manning of Los Angeles.

Although Bishop Walsh was under Communist surveillance until his arrest in 1958. After 18 months of interrogation, he was sentenced in 1960 to 20 years imprisonment.



Christmas Stamps for 1971

Two colorful stamps for the Christmas season are being made available this year by the U.S. Postal Service. One stamp, (left) designed by Jamie Wyeth, son and grandson of famed artists Andrew Wyeth and Newell Convers Wyeth, features a "a partridge in a pear tree" and contains the first line of the old English Christmas ballad. The partridge is in natural colors with red lettering against a dark green background. The stamp at right is a detail from Italian painter Giorgione's "Adoration of the Shepherds," painted about 1510, from the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Gold, yellow, red, blue, black and brown are combined to produce the stamp. Both stamps are in 8-cent denominations. (RNS)

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