

# FREE RADICALS

**E**veryone has an opinion on the last baseball strike and the continuing owner-player blustering and confrontations in virtually every major sport. My opinion is that both the owners and the players are making gobs of money, and that, as a result, ticket prices are too high and there are far too many commercials in televised games. And while I'm at it, the nacho sauce at ballparks is way too runny, and a beer in a plastic cup shouldn't cost five bucks.

The baseball strike situation is inconceivable in most occupations. Sports wields economic power and captures the popular fancy in a way that few other fields can. One argument for this clout of a small group of individuals is that they're giving us the "best of the best" — that is, we're paying to see skills that are very rare and very entertaining. There must be more to it, though, because we might say the same thing about classical music. Very few musicians reach the "big leagues" of classical music. Only a handful of American cities support world class symphony orchestras. Throw in the smaller ensembles that reach the first rank, and the number of jobs is still very small. In that respect, classical music is like baseball. Many people play; few people are good enough or lucky enough to make the bigs.

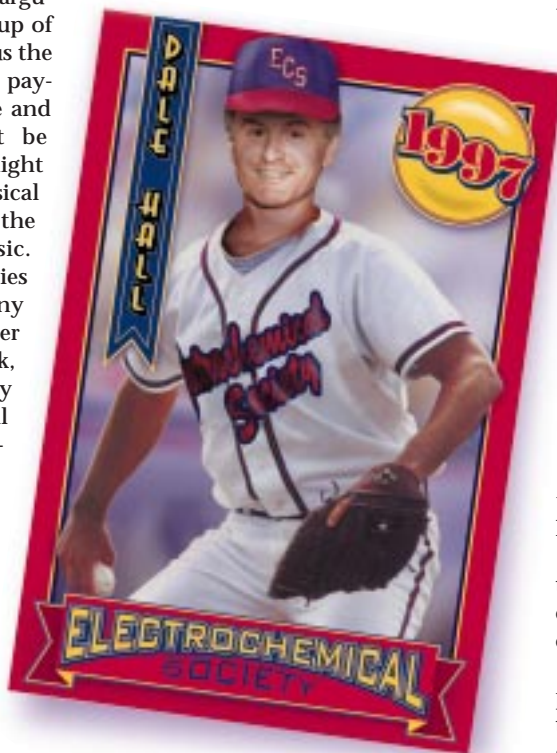
In another respect, however, classical music and baseball are worlds apart. The average major league baseball player makes well over one million dollars per year in salary, and for many, endorsements dwarf their salaries. Big league classical musicians probably make, on average, less than a tenth of that — and don't hold your breath waiting to see members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic hoisting frosty mugs in beer commercials. This comparison of economic value begs for social commentary, but I'll leave that to someone else.

Turning from the world of econom-



by Dale Hall

ics to the equally curious world of politics, we might compare classical musicians with another small and select group at the top of their field: national politicians. To me, the cru-



cial difference between them is that the influence of musicians is fairly benign, while politicians can and often do make us dance to their music. We can also take or leave what musicians offer, while politicians, by the very nature of what they do, are inescapable. But maybe musicians, given the keys to the king-

dom, wouldn't do any better. Let's look in on a different world, where musicians run the country and politicians must attract paying audiences in concert halls. We'll pass quickly by the nearly empty concert halls and tune in on our musical Congress:

Roger Reed (Bassoon - SD) introduced legislation today to make the teaching of Telemann's music mandatory in public schools. "In his own time," Reed said, "Telemann was considered

by many to be equal or superior to his contemporary, Bach, in both talent and accomplishment. It's time we stopped ignoring Telemann in our schools." Opponents, including Sylvia Keys (Harpsichord - CA) were quick to point out that Reed's bill was self-serving. "It is well known that Rep. Reed

receives royalties from his recording of Telemann's double concerto for recorder and bassoon," Keys noted. "The congressman is pushing a personal agenda while hoodwinking the public under the guise of improving education."

In other action on Capitol Hill, the House passed legislation to cut \$40 million from the annual subsidy to the National Endowment for Politics. Lawrence Libretto (Tenor - OK), who spearheaded the bill, cited several taxpayer-supported political speeches that he termed "outrageous and offensive to the people of my district." Taking an economic tack, Rep. Helen Pizzicato (Violin - NM) said that "politicians have to find paying customers for their services, just like everyone else. Federal handouts to this elite group are not the answer."

Not a pretty sight, is it? Maybe, political power and the temptations that go with it are too powerful for any group to resist. But, certainly, we electrochemists would prove to be made of sterner, more high-minded stuff... wouldn't we? Let's peek through the keyhole at a parallel world where electrochemists are the kingpins:

In a speech at the annual Presidents' Day parade in Fairport Harbor, Rep. Eric Rudd (Insoluble

*(continued on page 16)*

## Free Radicals

*(continued from page 15)*

Anode - OH) called for a national initiative to reduce energy usage in the electrochemical production of bulk chemicals and metals. He derided bipartisan legislation introduced jointly by Reps. Wayne Worrell (Solid State - PA) and Robert Frankenthal (Corrosion - NJ) on corrosion of solid state devices as "closing the barn door after the horse has bolted." Meanwhile, in Dallas to receive a "Son of Texas" award, Sen. Ralph White (Electrochem. Eng. - SC) said, "Neither of these ideas has a chance of passage in the Senate; both smack of industrial policy. What the federal government should do is support more research in electrochemical engineering to provide the private sector with the tools it needs to solve its own problems."

In one short paragraph (and with apologies to those whose names I used in fun), I've managed to convince myself that the quest for a more perfect world doesn't begin with electing electrochemists to Congress. I've decided to talk up my second idea, instead: that the world would be a better place if electrochemists were paid as well as major league baseball players. Are you with me? Let's play some ball! ■