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An "All-Star" Economy?

Baseball's beauty pageant was held last evening. The "All-Star" game is supposed to be a showpiece for the game of baseball. Instead, it seemed to reflect all that is wrong with our economy, and our nation.

For those of you who didn't stay up for it, Bud Selig, the commissioner of baseball, halted the game in the 11th inning. At the time, the score was tied at 7. He made his decision after both managers pleaded their cases that they had run out of pitchers.

Saving itself from what could only have been a cruel irony, it was decided that Major League Baseball would not award the newly named Ted Williams MVP trophy, named for one of the toughest ever to play the game (no doubt Ted was spinning in his cryogenic chamber over the ending of this game).

From my seat, Mr. Selig, the managers, and the players of Major League Baseball look a lot like corporate America. Rather than finish the game for the fans (sore arms or not) the CEO of baseball felt that the interests of a handful of extremely well compensated employees were more important than those who had loyally supported the operation with their hard earned money. Sound familiar?

Most disturbing about last evenings fiasco is that those that got the short end of the bat were not the managers (who had made the decision to cut short the pitchers time), not the players (who seemed to be more concerned about getting back to their private jets than sticking around for the fans), not Major League Baseball (that happily collected \$175 and up per seat plus significant TV revenue, concessions, etc.), but the fans.

The reaction by the fans at last nights game was decidedly negative. It was, however, not enough. Baseball fans need to start voting with their feet, shareholders with their proxies. Business leaders need to be held accountable for their actions, and one of the best ways is through the stock voting process.

Selling the stock of a corporation whose management practices you don't agree with is like throwing a beer bottle onto the playing field - it may make you feel better, but will have little effect on the overall outcome. Remember, the corporation receives its money from the sale of stock only during the initial public offering of its stock. Subsequent sales and purchases are between investors and have no direct effect on the bottom line of the company. Real reform will come only when we collectively demand it.

So the next time you are staring at a proxy form, give those folks in the board room something to think about from the cheap seats.