

WOMAN AND SPORT

Dr. SMODLAKA WOHN, Belgrad.

(Extract of a report at the VIIIth. Congress of the International Medical Sport's Federation published by the *Medical Sport's Federation's Bulletin.*)

Allow me to put to this Congress the following question: Are there any biological-medical reasons to prevent women as well as men to go in for any type of psycho-physical activity thus practising all kind of sports, endeavouring to beat records in speed, strength, skill, and endurance?

This question is of topical interest as there still exist a great many scientists who forbid certain sports to women on the ground of health.

On this particular point we have adopted an attitude differing fundamentally from the recognized point of view of to-day: We actually allow women to carry out all forms of psycho-physical activities and to practise all the games and sports. We shall therefore endeavour to explain our point of view while urging the Congress to adopt a definite position regarding this important matter.

In modern times, woman has acquired the right to exercise any kind of physical or psychological activities. She ploughs, she helps harvesting, she scythes, carries heavy loads, works in factories and workshops, in offices and schools, in hospitals, in scientific Institutes and she studies the Faculties at the Universities, she also takes an active part in all the branches of Arts and carries off marks of distinctions in all spheres, all this entitles her to be recognized according to her capacities.

Athletism and Sports aim at increasing man's physical power. It is through the channels of sports' competitions that this result is obtained. Man and woman become all-round sportsmen by acquiring speed, skill strength and endurance.

Man has the privilege to practise all forms of sports without being handicapped by contra-indications of a general order. Woman, on the other hand, does not enjoy the same privilege. She is only allowed to compete in the sports displaying speed and skill while all sorts of restrictions are imposed on her as regards to sports where endurance and strength are the outstanding features. She has the right to compete in the 800 m. races, in the swimming contests up to 400 meters, in skiing races of 3 to 6 km., short distances cycling, rowing and skating.

Which could be the main biological or medical reasons likely to forbid to women the practice of sports where strength and endurance come in foremost? If, constitutionally, congenitally and as a result of the wrong type of upbringing, women have become weaker than men it does not mean that because of these facts, access to all

forms of psycho-physical activity should be denied to them. If, for example, Pygmies cannot go in for the same psycho-physical tests than the species of the Dinaric race, shall we go as far as to forbid them to compete on equal terms with others and to score marks of distinction in keeping with their development?

The existing physical differences between man and woman are constantly impressing men and cause them to have out of date and erroneous notions about women. Let us see these differences.

Differences of weight at birth:

	Women	Men
APERT	3 200 gr.	3 250 gr.
VARIOT	3 020 gr.	3 130 gr.
MCAULIFF	3 250 gr.	3 350 gr.

Sovietic experts, after having taken a record of the measurements of the Moscow children, over the period 1932-1935, have discovered that the new born males measure 51 cm. in length and the new born females 50 cm.

PFISTER has found that man has bigger kidneys and GUNDOBIN discovered that man has a blooder with a larger capacity.

From statistics drawn by BUNAK, NESTURH and ROGINSKI the height and the weight of the average man and woman are respectively: 165 cm. and 64 kg. and 165 cm. and 56 kg. Investigations regarding this matter were carried out in Yugo-Slavia in the region of Zica, revealed that the average of 171 cm. height and 58,2 kg-weight are the measurements for women.

The recorded measurements which we have taken at the National Institute of Physical Training are as follow: Average height of the male student 174,8 cm. and 68,4 kg. weight as against average height of 161,7 cm. and 57,5 kg. for women students.

MANOUVRIER has discovered that women have abdominal organs more developed in comparison with the thorax and the muscles while they had shorter limbs especially the arms. ROLLEY proved that women have the forearm and the legs shorter, their thorax is smaller and their abdomen larger, their sternum is 5 cm. shorter.

This difference of the biological and the sexual order between man and woman becomes more pronounced under the influence of outside and inside inferences. The strength of this influence has been noticed by numerous scientists.

The outside factors are geographical,

climatic, seasonal also professional and economic social spheres, the last two factors are expressed in historical evolution and the social status.

The inside factors are: genotypic, endocrinal, sexual and pathological.

English statistics taken about 1930 give the following results:

English students measure: height 174,3 cm., weight 63,8 kg.,

English workmen measure: height 170,9 cm., weight 59,7 kg.,

English workmen out of work measure: height 169 cm., weight 56,6 kg.

SCHWINNING has proved that urban populations are taller than country folk and that students top the height of their fellow countrymen.

STAMBUK and KESIC have proved respectively that pupils and apprentices who have received only primary education were smaller in stature than their comrades of the same age educated in the secondary schools.

RÖSSELE and BÖNING have made comparative studies of the development of children born in 1878-1880 and those born in 1921, they found that the latter were one centimeter taller. Likewise, RÖSSELE has found that conscripts of all European countries have grown taller in the last fifty years.

ERISMAN, in 1885, has taken the measurements of the young men belonging to the village of Gluhova in the neighbourhood of Moscow: Sovietic experts resumed these researches in 1927 and in 1934. It has been proved that youths of 1934 were more developed than those born in 1927 and 1885. One can thus perceive the direct outcome of the much improved social and economic conditions of living.

GODIN shows that warmth promotes bodily growth and activities manifestations of puberty.

PFLAUNDER, SCHLEZINGER, MACKENSIE demonstrated that bodily growth derives directly from the number of rooms in a dwelling, while VILLERME, GOULD, BERTRAND, PERRY MONTBLE, LEGUES proved that persons brought up in comfort are taller in stature. Lastly GALSER, UHLITSCH, EISMAN, PAGIANI, etc., show how substantial, good food promotes a normal physical development and tends to increase the weight.

MATHIAS found that an exhaustive psychophysical activity hinders normal growth and that overworked school children grew quicker during the summer holidays.

DURAND DE GROS stresses that people living in chalky soil areas are of high stature.

All these examples tend to prove the influence of the various factors external and internal on the development of man and woman. It is obvious that as long as both sexes are submitted from childhood to the influence of different types of education the existing specific difference between the sexes will increase. Do we bring up a woman

with the idea of her growing up frail, without strength nor staying power, devoid of fighting spirit? Are we not entitled to expect some help in the scheme of reconstruction from such a citizen? Let us change our outlook and in a certain measure we shall transform the characteristic of woman and turn her into a vigorous being, able to withstand a hard life, full of fighting spirit and determination. From infancy, we train our girls to play with dolls and boys to play at soldiers, we do not see any harm in this. However, in physical culture and training for sports it is imperative to instil in both sexes, speed, skill, strength and endurance because these qualities are necessary to both. This does not infer that woman shall be equal to man. Biologically and sexually this is impossible. Women cannot become masculine as certain people pretend. In various sporting competitions, especially in track events, we often notice women competitors with masculine tendencies. These have caused antagonists of sports for women to blame the latter for being the cause of this change in aspect. This is not the case and we must try to see it in its true aspect. Sporting competitions imply a selection. Victory goes to those who know best how to adapt themselves to the final effort. Thus track events are often won by women showing masculine qualities of strength, speed and endurance.
