

THE OLYMPIC GAMES MOVEMENT

ITS INTERNATIONAL ASPECT

(From Lord Burghley, British Olympic champion in 1928, actual member of the Executive Committee of the I. O. C. and President of the International amateur Athletic Federation.)

In 1894, a Frenchman called Baron Pierre de Coubertin reached the conclusion that the youth of the world was not developing all those characteristics which were so desirable for an ideal citizen to possess. He found, on the other hand, that they were more highly developed in those countries in which the youth took an active part in sport than in those where it was still relatively unknown. He therefore got in touch with some leaders in public life in a number of countries, who shared his views, and the International Olympic Committee was formed.

The first Olympic Games of the modern era were held in 1896 in Athens, and they have been held subsequently every four years, with the exception of the war years.

As so often happens with a movement of high ideals, much adversity was met with in the early days. However, where an ideal is a sound one, in the long run it will prevail. So it is that the Olympic Games to-day attract the youth from over sixty nations, and are followed by tens of millions of ordinary people throughout the world.

For those who may not be aware of it, every sport of the seventeen included in the Games has its own governing body in each country, and they each combine into an International Federation, which lays down the conditions for that particular sport for international events between the different countries.

It is a remarkable thing that a very large

number of competitors, on retiring from active sport, give wholeheartedly of their time, on an unpaid basis, helping to organise their sport for those coming on. The result is that there is a high-principled, wellqualified and enthusiastic band running the great International Federations and Governing Bodies throughout the world.

The Olympic Games are now the world championships for most of the sports, and a happy relationship has grown up between the International Olympic Committee and these International Federations. The technical control is, of course, in the hands of the Federations, but the general arrangements and the responsibility for keeping the spirit of the Games alive and flourishing rest in the hands of the International Olympic Committee.

This body is now composed of one, two or three Members from most of the countries which are represented at the Games. It meets once a year in some major city of the world, and between these meetings the Executive Committee deals with the day to day problems.

The channel between individual countries and the International Olympic Committee is not only through the Members of the Committee in the country concerned, but also through the National Olympic Committee, which each country possesses. This body is usually composed very largely of the representatives of the many different sports included in the Games, and it carries the responsibility for equipping and sending its national team to the Games.

As regards the Games themselves, in a world so troubled and racked with dissension

and suspicion, it is not only remarkable, but very encouraging, that the cream of the youth of the world gathers for this great festival of sport once every four years, to compete wholeheartedly, not only under the letter of the Rules, but in their spirit, too.

Sport to-day seems to be the one great common denominator between the youth of the world. The International Olympic Committee have never lost sight of the aim that, not only are their Games to be a gigantic competition between all the best athletes of the world, but that, when these young people return to their homes, they should feel that they are mentally enriched by their mixing with the athletes of other countries and making common cause with them in competitions, and the friendships which I know from personal experience spring up. It is essential that this should be felt by all, whether successful or not, and they must return home inspired and uplifted by their participation in this great festival of sport, so that they, in turn, will spread this spirit far and wide in their own lands.

In 1948, in spite of the destruction of the war, Great Britain staged the XIVth Olympiad. This proved to be a gigantic undertaking, with a budget of expenses and receipts of about three-quarters of a million pounds. There were six thousand competitors and officials to be housed, and, owing to the housing shortage, they had to be accommodated in nearly thirty different centres. Over 300 000 vehicle miles were driven in the three weeks in transporting the competitors to and from the stadiums and training grounds. In spite of these difficulties, the Games were administratively a success, and the competitions were superb. To those of

us, however, who played a part in their organisation, our reward was that fellowship and camaraderie, which is the very foundation of true amateur sport, spread through all the competitors and spectators, and was, indeed, imparted to the many millions who eagerly followed the course of the Games, by radio, news papers and films.

This year, Helsinki is to be the host for an even greater festival of sport. An organisation of this magnitude obviously offers some tremendous problems, but our Finnish friends have grappled with them with that determination and efficiency which we would expect from them; and, so far as is humanly possible. I know that everything will be done there to ensure their smooth running and complete success.

In 1956, the Games move on to Melbourne, in Australia, and already plans are being made. As regards 1960, a decision as to the host country will not be reached by the International Olympic Committee for another year or two.

So it is that the great Olympic movement marches on, spurred by a gigantic army of voluntary supporters, who, by their very enthusiasm, ensure the sweep forward.

In this world, there are all too many who are prepared to look for reasons for tearing something down; but that does not lead to progress. Here is a movement building up something infinitely worth while, and I am therefore happy to have this opportunity of putting these few thoughts on paper, and asking those of you who have widely and deeply pondered about such matters to do what you can to help and support our great movement.