

The National Olympic Committees

The setting up of the National Olympic Committees goes back to the time of the Renovating of the Olympic Games. The second issue of the *I. O. C.'s Bulletin* (October 1894) actually specifies that « every country must appoint a National Committee which shall be assigned the task to assure its country's participation to the Olympic Games every four years till such a time that it will be its turn to organize the Games at home ». It quoted further: « We think that within the limits fixed by the Congress, full and entire independence must be granted to the National Committees. » The formula, in this respect, has never been altered. The number of the Members, the duration of their mandate and the mode of nomination... everything has been left for each country to settle for itself and it is because of this that one has been able to see an American Committee consisting of one hundred persons discharging its functions at the same time than a Japanese Committee composed of only four members. However the appointing of a National Committee has persistently been exacted. At the time of the Games Celebration of the IVth Olympiad (1908) the French Federations having tried to dispense with such established practice, they were compelled to give in, on the refusal of the British National Olympic Committee to correspond directly with them.

At the beginning, the National Olympic Committees were only temporary and could not maintain themselves in office from one

Olympiad to another. Germany formed the first permanent Committee then Greece and Great-Britain followed, afterwards the other countries did likewise. About the date of the Vth Olympiad (1912) the number of the permanent Committees was sufficiently high to entrust their Delegates with the drawing up of the definite and final Program for the Olympic Games. For this reason the I. O. C. at its Session, in Budapest in 1911, decided to convene a Congress of the National Olympic Committees, in Paris in 1914. Up to that time, the country responsible for the organizing of the Games had been tied in the discharge of its duties, only by the application of the general rules established in 1894. This state of semi-independence was absolutely indispensable during the first period, in order to allow the new organization to become acclimatized also to enable it to overcome the formidable difficulties experienced as the result of the negligence of State officials as well as the distrustful public opinion. The Swedish Program of 1912 was however submitted to the I. O. C.'s approval, on three occasions, namely in 1909, 1910 and 1911, and was modified according to the instructions of the I. O. C.

(Extract of a circular-letter addressed to the Members of the I. O. C. by Pierre de Coubertin, dated Lausanne, December 1920.)

Today, the part played by the National Olympic Committees is clearly defined in the Olympic Rules, Editor.

The International Federations

The first tribute paid by the I. O. C. to the International Federations dates back to the very day after the Renovation of the Olympic Games. The Committee's Bulletin under the date of January 1895, in actual fact, records the preliminary Program of the Games at Athens. It also specifies that the ruling to be applied to the various sports must be as follows: the foot races are submitted to the Rules of the Union of the French Clubs of athletic sports — jumping and throwing events come under those of the British Amateur Athletic Association — rowing and canoeing follow those of the Italian Rowing Club — while the cycling events (which was called velocipede in those days, Editor.) came under the Rules of the International Cyclists Union. Furthermore it is also mentioned in this particular Bulletin that the « Société d'Encouragement » for fencing, of Paris, as well as the French Yachting Union have agreed to draw up a set of Rules controlling the fencing and yachting events. The International Cyclists Union was the only International Federation in existence

in those days. (What about the International Rowing Federation which was founded in 1893? *Editor.*)

The principle thus established has been in force ever since. As soon as new International Federations sprang into being, the rules controlling each branch of sport began to conform themselves to a standard of unity; the I. O. C. was then able to prescribe these Rules to the organizers of the Games with the strict injunctions to accept and apply them. It is only fair and rational that the Rules set up by the International Federations should be acknowledged as the only laws in force at the Games. Upon our proposal, the Congress which took place in Paris in 1914, adopted this course of action.

Since then the International Federations have full authority over the technical conduct of the events of the sports which they control, they also assure the functioning of the appointed Juries.

(Communication made to the Members of the I. O. C. by Pierre de Coubertin in December 1920.)