

The Address of President Avery Brundage

at the opening ceremony of the session of the I.O.C.

Mr. President of the Republic,
Excellencies,

My dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assembled here in this great French University, birth place of the Olympic Movement and the source and origin of so many other momentous forward steps in the progress of mankind, it is appropriate that we of the International Olympic Committee who are responsible for the Olympic Movement review the past and consider the future. The phenomenal success of the project unfolded in this same hall of the Sorbonne, only sixty years ago by the Baron de Coubertin and the tremendous enthusiasm with which his proposal has been accepted by the entire civilized world are known to all. Never has an idea met with such universal approval in such a short time. I have just recently returned from a 40 000 kilometre trip to Australia and the Orient, to the Southern Hemisphere and to the Far East, and I can assure you that in far away Tokyo, in Manila, in Seoul, in Sydney and in Melbourne, there are thousands and thousands of devotees of the Olympic Movement, just as there are here in Europe and in America. The word "Olympic" is the magic word today on all five continents.

In considering the future, it is essential

to reflect on why this is so — just what is the reason the Olympic Movement has captured the interest, the respect and the loyalty of the people of every country and of every race. There is of course a widespread desire for competition and for victory. But that does not explain the support of the millions who do not compete. It is something greater and more important that attracts and holds the devotion of the huge numbers who carry the Olympic torch today. Baron de Coubertin himself was not an athlete. He was an educator and a scholar. Certainly he had observed the benefits from competitive sport in building health and strength for the youth of Great Britain and the United States, for sport was largely an Anglo-Saxon development in the nineteenth century and he wished to provide those same benefits for the youth of all the world. But that was not all, his was not merely a vulgar effort to promote the mechanization of the body and the muscles. It took a Frenchman who was not an athlete to perceive the latent and undeveloped moral, educational and spiritual possibilities in competitive sports.

Acquainted as he was with the history of the Ancient Olympic Games, he knew there must be some powerful reason why those Games persisted for almost twelve

centuries as a vital part of the life of Greece when Hellas was the center of the civilized world. The ancient Games were at least semi-religious in character and they were amateur in nature, with emphasis on grace and beauty of body, mind and spirit. They were associated with the fine arts and they were conducted in a dignified and reverent manner becoming to a religious rite. The code was faithfully observed by all and woe to the, person who violated the regulations. The whole atmosphere surrounding the Games at ancient Olympia was most inspiring.

Mr. de Coubertin knew fully well that the future rests in the hands of the youth of the world. He saw in amateur sport the only common ground where the rising generations of all races might meet and mingle on an equal basis. He realized the character building values of amateur sport and he firmly believed that youth trained to follow the code of fair play and sportsmanship, of chivalry and of "noblesse oblige" on which amateur sport is founded, would lead the people of the world along peaceful paths of mutual understanding and respect. He did not, he said, revive the Games for the counting house, the journalists and the cinema. His object was the ennoblement of humanity for a better and happier world. It was his vision and foresight in laying the foundation for and sketching the plans of the framework of the modern Olympic Movement that has insured its great success.

"In the Olympic Games, the important thing is not the winning but the taking part. The essential thing in life is not to conquer but to fight well."

All of the great structure of organized international amateur sport which exists

today has followed in the wake of the revival of the Olympic games. It did not exist sixty years ago. It flourishes because it is based on the philosophy so ably expounded for the first time by the Baron de Coubertin. It has been created by volunteers who have been happy to contribute to it and have not sought to take from it. There have been no large funds or endowments. It has been the work of amateurs. It is an idealistic enterprise embodying the highest aspirations of mankind and it can continue to exist only as an idealistic enterprise.

The perils of success are many. We live in materialistic times, and it is not easy to resist tendencies toward commercialism. In a world engaged in a titanic allout struggle between different political systems, it is not a simple matter to keep aloof. Without money and without soldiers, it is difficult to fend off those who oppose us, particularly when they do have money and soldiers. We can only rely on the support of those who believe in the principles of fair play and sportsmanship embodied in the amateur code, in our efforts to prevent the Games from being by individuals, organizations or nations for ulterior purposes. The Olympic Movement has been accepted on all five continents because of its purity, its honesty and its freedom from political intrigue and dollar signs ; because it places sportsmanship above skill, nobility above fame and honour above success and because it holds out hope for a happier, healthier and more peaceful world. The International Olympic Committee which has the responsibility to protect this idealistic enterprise asks your assistance in keeping the Olympic escutcheon untarnished.