

# NEWS FROM LEBANON

Mr. Gabriel Gemayel, Member of the International Olympic Committee and President of the Lebanese Olympic Committee, presided in Beyrouth, over the first "Physical and Sport Education's Congress" organized in Lebanon, by the Council for physical and sport Education in schools, University and French Colleges.

At that Congress, important decisions concerning the future of sports instruction in schools were taken. This Congress met with great success, as much by quality of the diverse subjects brought under discussion as by the number of the people attending.

The organizers insisted in placing this manifestation under the patronage and Presidency of the representative of the I.O.C. Mr. Gabriel Gemayel, thus showing what interest and esteem they feel for the Olympic Movement.

In his opening speech which we are publishing below, Mr. Gabriel Gemayel rightly pointed out that Pierre de Coubertin ever since 1887, had taken a keen interest in the reform of the schools curriculum, when he maintained that schoolchildren were not given enough time to allow "them to develop and exercise their muscles".

Herewith is Mr. Gemayel speech which he delivered at the opening meeting of the Congress :

"It may appear strange that a member of the International Olympic Committee should take the chair in a Congress dealing with the Physical Education of children. Olympism is so closely connected with the conception of competition, that one wonders at the link that exists between Educationalists and the directive Powers of sport performances. I hasten to add, and this is of prime importance that I refer to sport performances reserved to amateurs.

I must admit that I was very astonished when Mr. Victor Bercin begged me to preside over this Congress. But I recalled the fact that Pierre de Coubertin, the Renovator of the Modern Olympic Games, took an interest and gave prime importance, throughout his life, to the basic value of Physical Education of the children. Was he not fundamentally right ?

Physical Education is surely the necessary basis to all sports activities. What results could be achieved by an athlete whose body has not been submitted to training beforehand ? A basketball player who cannot run or jump, a footballer who is easily winded, would indeed make poor performers.

In 1887, Pierre de Coubertin was one of the first to criticize the school curriculum which was in force at that time. He did so as the apparent disciple of Rousseau, when he wrote in his "Notes on Public Education" that Jean Jacques Rousseau,

though an utopist in politics, showed himself most happily inspired in certain chapters of his "Emile". It was about that time that, according to de Coubertin statement, school boys in spite of their heavy school programme, found time to develop their lungs and exercise their muscles. While stressing the necessity for reforming the system in school education, Pierre de Coubertin, from that moment never deviated one moment from the firm stand he had been adopting. "Our main object, said he, is to make within our schools, our children strong. However, he went on, the school must not become a factory only concerned with producing bodily strength but more so an institution embodying the social values of Physical Education".

## RECREATIVE AND EDUCATIVE SPORTS

De Coubertin, it goes without saying, perceived perfectly the difference between what he described as the "recreative sports and the specifically educative sports". What characterizes the educative sports is, in the first place, the part played, while performing them of certain qualities of a moral nature. In the second place, it is their peculiar feature to give the impression that the period of improving of their adepts is, as it were, illimited, and consequently, the interest fostered among their followers goes on increasing indefinitely. This last factor never deceives when it comes to appreciate the true value of an educative sport.

It means that when the child reaches manhood, he will be fully equipped to bear up victoriously the ups and downs which are to be met in the course of an average existence.

## SEEKING WHAT ARE THE NATURAL MOVEMENTS OF THE BODY

However, let us remember that man is an engineer in intimate relationship with his engine which he must learn to control, move, keep up and repair. It is therefore essential, and this has been done, to determine carefully which are the natural movements inherent to the human body, once this is done, one can then proceed to set a suitable daily training in order to reestablish, if necessary, the balance between the different parts of the organism, which may have been abnormally developed while practising exclusively one type of sport. De Coubertin has himself admitted that sport is in no way inherent to man, for sport demands not only a well thought out preparation of controlled effort which is called training, but as well as this, an ardent desire to win and to enjoy the moral satisfaction which is the apantage of victory.

Before ending, I would like, Ladies and Gentlemen, to thank you for the active part you have taken in the work of this first Congress, thus showing the real interest you are taking in the development of the Physical Education of our children. I am sure

that the outcome of these debates will bring forth useful decisions concerning the health of our young people. We want them to be healthy and strong also capable of assuming the responsibilities which are awaiting them when the day comes for them to take over.