

Speech of Avery Brundage

President of the International Olympic Committee

This week the flag with the five interlocked circles will be hoisted for the first time over an Olympic event in Italy. The 1908 Games, which were originally scheduled for Rome, were held in London, and for nearly fifty years Italian sportsmen have been awaiting this opportunity to demonstrate to the world their interest in the Olympic Movement and to exercise their warm-hearted hospitality. In the meantime there have been many outstanding Italian accomplishments in connection with the Games and numerous Olympic medals have been won by Italian athletes.

For the sportsmen of the world this also presents a great opportunity to visit this historic country,

once the center of civilization. For centuries all roads led to Rome, the capital of the Western world, and even today we find majestic Roman ruins in a score of different countries. The ancient Romans were great warriors, great statesmen, and great administrators, and Roman law as codified by the Emperor Justinian prevailed throughout the civilized world.

In the modern world, with a much greater area involved (now over 80 National Olympic Committees are recognized by the International Olympic Committee), there is also a universal law, at least in the world of sport. The Olympic code of fair play and good sportsmanship, a modern adaptation

of the Golden Rule. is observed today on all five continents. One of the objectives of the Olympic Movement is to make these laws of fair play, largely unwritten, so universally accepted that they will be adopted also in other fields. One of the greatest sources of trouble today is the lack of understanding in human relationships. No activity does more to dissipate this lack of understanding than the Olympic Movement. Only when the business and the politics of the world are governed by the same spirit of fair play and good sportsmanship will mankind be able to live in peace.

The Olympic Games are not just another athletic event, they are a grand festival of the youth of the world under the most favourable auspices. This accounts for their universal popularity despite differences of language, of social customs, and of economic advancement. The social, educational, aesthetic and moral qualities of amateur sport are stressed by the International Olympic Committee. It is these by-products of amateur sport that account for its great importance and make "Olympic" the magic word today.

Man having partly conquered nature, first by harnessing animals, and then by taming the natural forces of water power, steam, electricity, and now the atom has largely eliminated the need for human muscular effort, but man has depended for thousands of years on his muscles and they must be kept strong and supple for good health. Moreover, there is a great satisfaction that comes to the well rounded person with an active and alert mind in a sound body. Strength, agility and speed are manly qualities that produce both respect and personal satisfaction. For one who participates in the Olympic Games there are thousands who try : this counteracts a certain softness in modern society. "Rejoice, o young man, in thy strength".

The ancient Romans were a strong and martial people who fought off the barbarians and gradually

conquered the known world. Treasures and tribute from a dozen countries were brought to Italy. The people grew soft and lazy. Give us bread and entertainment was the cry of the public. The circus Maximus in Rome held 385,000 spectators. By 354 A.D., 175 days of the year, it is said, were given over to games and entertainment in both Rome and Constantinople. Whole cities were agitated by the contests in the arena. The idea was not for the "best man" to win but for "our man" to win. Unlike the ancient Greeks the Romans did not descend into the arena, which was left to professionals, gladiators, grooms, etc. They were spectators, not participants, and lacked the discipline of sport training. Eventually, a victim of her own prosperity, Rome fell to the barbarians, the hard and tough Goths and Vandals, invaders from the North.

Today in Italy things are different. C.O.N.I., the Italian Olympic Committee, has a program to bring to all the young people of the country, the benefits of physical education and competitive sport. Playgrounds and swimming pools are to be built in every city and village. At the same time they are taught the philosophy of amateurism and the Olympic Movement. Today it is "May the best man win". In a land of natural beauty, devoted to the Fine Arts, sport buildings are constructed according to beautiful architectural designs. Olympic regulations are followed and amateur sport is conducted according to the high ideals of the Olympic Movement..

We are happy to be here in this famous and historic country. We compliment our Italian friends on the arrangements they have made to insure the success of the VII Olympic Winter Games, and we rejoice that the Olympic Movement has passed another milestone on its way toward a happier and healthier world.