

C I R C U L A R L E T T E R

sent in December 1955 by the President of the International Olympic Committee
to National Olympic Committees

with copies to International Federations and International Olympic Committee

Dear Sirs,

The International Olympic Committee has been greatly disturbed by articles which have appeared in newspapers and magazines in various countries citing performance in the Olympic Games as a measure of political or social conditions in different countries. The International Olympic Committee has officially expressed itself on many occasions on this subject. It wishes to repeat it once more as follow :

Scoring of Points

“The Olympic Games are a contest between individuals. They are designed to be a joyous festival of the youth of the world. The competitors give their best efforts — win if they can — but, if not, rejoice with the victors.

“The Games are not, and must not become, a contest between nations, which would be entirely contrary to the spirit of the Olympic Movement and would surely lead to disaster. For this reason there is no official score of nations and tables of points are really misinformation because they are entirely inaccurate. To be correct they would have to be weighted, since it is certainly unfair to

give the winner of the marathon or decathlon, a winning gymnast, pistol shooter or yachtsman, and a winning football or basketball team the same score. Moreover, to be fair the factor of population should be considered, and if careful analysis were made it would be discovered that many small nations have won far more Olympic medals on a per capita basis than the larger countries.

“Normal national pride is perfectly legitimate, but neither the Olympic Games nor any other sport contest can be said to indicate the superiority of one political system over another, or of one country over another. One of the objects of the Olympic Games is to build international good will, and efforts made to pit one nation against another in this or any other manner must be severely censured.”

One of the objectives of the Olympic Movement is to establish and develop friendship among the people of the world. The International Olympic Committee resents attempts to use the Games as a political instrument, or to pit one country against another. We trust that you will do everything in your power to discourage the publication of scoring tables, which are quite worthless as stated above.